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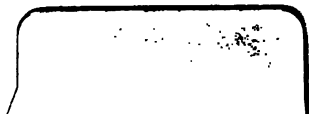
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THE DOUBLE PROPHECY;

OR,

TRIALS OF THE HEART.



THE
DOUBLE PROPHECY;
OR,
TRIALS OF THE HEART.

BY WILLIAM CARLETON

AUTHOR OF "TRAITS AND STORIES OF THE IRISH PEASANTRY"—
"WILLY REILLY"—"VALENTINE M'CLUTCHY"—
"THE EVIL EYE"—ETC., ETC.

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THE
DOUBLE PROPHECY;

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CHAPTER VIII.

A BRIEF CORRESPONDENCE—JEALOUSY CONFIRMED—AN EVENING
PARTY—AND THE ABDUCTION OF MARIA.

WHEN Miss Travers returned that Sunday after church, her first question as usual was :

“ Well Becky, was there any body here since?”

Now this, we have said, was a usual one, but on this occasion it was significant and pointed. Maria had not gone to church, and the veteran saw that when Clinton missed her from it, he immediately went out, and did not return. This was very mortifying to herself, because it proved the very disagreeable fact, that her own charms were not of sufficient influence to attract this interesting youth, and hold him to his

devotions. She immediately smelt an assignation between Maria and him, and began to suspect the game which for his own purposes he was playing with herself. As it was, she nursed her wrath against the unfortunate Maria, upon whose head she intended to pour the full phial of her wrath, should she find her suspicions well founded.

“ Well Becky, was there any body here since ?”

“ No ma’am ; gracious me ! who would be here ?”

“ Was Miss Brindsley out ?”

“ Out ! not a step out o’ the drawin’-room. Don’t you know yourself she wasn’t able to go to church, and yet you ask me was she out. Deil a foot she had out, poor thing !”

Miss Travers breathed freely, but still she could not forgive Clinton for having deserted the pew in which she sat. After the strong and earnest pressure of the hand which he had given her at their last parting, she thought his conduct rather mysterious and unaccountable, and, in fact, knew not to what cause, unless sudden agitation and illness, she should ascribe it. The young man might have been over-

powered, for she had never dressed herself with so much taste and elegance as upon that particular occasion.

And here we regret that we are not a man-milliner, that we might give the reader a minute and artistic description of her costume, after the manner of so many male milliners, who produce fashionable novels in the present day. These are matched only by the cabinet-making novelists, who shine so brilliantly in the furniture department. But, God help us ! we are neither a man-miliner nor a cabinet-maker, and consequently our readers, like good Christians as they are, must learn to deny themselves the pleasure of studying dress and furniture as sources of high moral information. The costume of Miss Travers therefore goes undescribed.

Honest Becky, true to the bribe, and unconsciously influenced by Talleyrand's definition of political gratitude, "a lively sense of favours to come," applied the same principle to love, and kept Clinton's visit a secret ; but with what success we shall soon see.

Maria, in the meantime, did not feel at ease, but she was so ignorant of the customs and

usages of life, and so unconscious of having done anything wrong, especially with reference to Clinton's unexpected and unauthorized visit to her, that she felt it would be imprudent to mention anything connected with herself among them. She knew that the burthen of their daily conversation was the scandal of the town and the freaks of the officers in the garrison. Under these circumstances she resolved to keep herself free from their tongues, or it might be their suspicions—for above all things she dreaded to have her own name and that of Clinton associated. In the meantime, ever since the preceding Sunday, Miss Bennet's eye appeared to be charged with some mysterious triumph, and it was evident that that sense of triumph was devoted against Maria. She seemed to have been in the possession of a secret in connexion with her. If she possessed the secret, however, she breathed not a syllable of it ; but there was a malignant severity in her manner, an ironical politeness, which seemed to insinuate that "she could an' if she would."

At length, one morning after breakfast—"I wonder," said she, "that we have not had a visit

from some of those handsome officers in town ; there are a number of very pretty girls here, and it is extraordinary that they don't look after us—Captain Doolittle at least—but I am afraid he is ungrateful.” As she spoke this, she glanced significantly at Maria.

Now there were two persons present who were especially interested in this observation, and it so happened that both felt themselves rather relieved by it—we mean Maria and the old maid Miss Travers. Maria felt at ease, because she saw, or, poor girl, she thought she saw, that Miss Bennet had made a mistake, and hit upon the wrong man. Miss Travers, on the other hand, had inferred from the hints which had fallen from Clinton, that there might have existed some understanding between Maria and Doolittle, a circumstance which she felt as a great relief to herself, because Maria could not be considered any longer in the character of a rival. So far Miss Bennet seemed to have done more good than harm. Miss Bennet, however, thought she knew what was on the cards, and she played them accordingly. Betty M'Cleane was also present, and except that she

watched Miss Bennet furtively but closely, she never uttered a syllable.

"I will not have this house the scene of such visits," observed Miss Travers ; "no officer shall visit here with one exception only."

"And pray what exception is that, Miss Travers," asked Miss Bennet.

"I mean Lieutenant Clinton, because he is the son of one of my best and oldest friends. I could not with any sense of gratitude to his mother prevent him from calling to pay his respects to me."

"But suppose you or somebody else here has made a conquest of Captain Doolittle."

"But I can't suppose any such thing ; Captain Doolittle bears a very bad character so far as women are concerned, and it would be dangerous to the reputation of my establishment to admit his visits. Hush ! who can that be ? Oh, some customer ; Becky will attend to it."

In a few minutes Becky came up.

"Well Becky, who is that ?"

"One o' the officers, ma'am, a Captain Doolittle sends his compliments and wishes to see Miss Brindsley for a few minutes."

Miss Bennet smiled and looked at Miss Travers, as if she understood the whole circumstance, and then at the rest in the same spirit.

Maria unhesitatingly rose up, her tell-tale blushes, as on too many other occasions, absolutely seeming to betray something like conscious guilt.

“Who is this man,” said she, in a tone of indignation, which might as well have been imputed—when we consider her auditors—to resentment at his want of prudence as to any other motive. “Who is this man, that has the effrontery to call on me? I know no such person ; I have no such acquaintance ; and I know not why he should dare to call upon me. Go and tell him, Beckey, that I will not see him, and that I look upon his visit to me as a cowardly insult.”

“He is acting very wrongly, very imprudently I should say,” observed Miss Bennet, “to attempt to see you here, Maria. He ought to know the world better ;” and again she glanced significantly at Miss Travers and the girls. The latter were evidently influenced by those

looks, and took it for granted that there was a mystery in the business ; but Maria, who was weeping bitterly, saw not the understanding which Miss Bennet had contrived to establish among them.

“Go down, Becky,” said she, “and give him the answer I have told you.”

“And come back, Becky, and let us hear what he says,” added Miss Bennet.

Becky went, and returned in a few minutes with the answer.

“Well, Becky,” said Miss Bennet, “what did he say?”

“He said,” replied Becky, “that it was a d—d shame for her not to know her own mind.”

Another triumphant look from Miss Bennet was the result of this reply, and Miss Travers, looking at Maria, who was in a state of great distress, said, in a very cold and severe tone of voice,

“Well, I must say, I think the whole affair very strange ; indeed, it is difficult to know some people.”

“What do you mean, Miss Travers,” said Maria, with an expression of indignant spirit

which startled all who heard her. "Do you pretend to suppose that I know this man—or rather, this profligate—for such, by all accounts, he is. Do you imagine that I ever saw him to my knowledge, or spoke to him, or held any kind of intimacy with him? I tell you that I never did, nor can I account for his visit to me. Miss Travers," she proceeded, the tears streaming from her eyes, "I am here an orphan girl, and I entreat you, as far as you can, to protect me from those insults. I have been placed under your care by a lady who is and has been a warm friend to you; and I trust that if it were only on her account, you will see and guard my good name—at least so long as I preserve it by my own good conduct, which, I trust in Almighty God, and with his grace and assistance, will be during my whole life."

Miss Bennet slightly raised her eye-brows, and turned up her eyes, in such a way as if the act was only the consequence of her own private knowledge, but not at all to be perceived by any person present.

Maria had taken her seat, which happened to be next to that of Betty M'Clean, who, seeing

her in such distress, clapped her on the shoulder, saying, "Don't cry, Maria ; make your mind easy ; if nobody else will protect you, I will ; come, keep a stout heart, and remember that you have *me* at your back."

This excited some laughter, though not much ; for we need scarcely say here, that Maria, ever civil, and gentle, and obliging, had the majority of her fellow workwomen with her in any misunderstanding that may have happened to occur between her and Miss Bennet.

In the course of that very day, Becky, meeting Maria on the stairs, gave her a letter which she said had been just then handed to her by a countrywoman. Maria, apprehending it might have been from her mother, brought it immediately to her bedroom, and read as follows :

"MY DEAR MISS BRINDSLEY—I am taking another unpardonable liberty, which I trust you will forgive. After leaving you on Sunday, I found that I had not expressed the tithe of what I had intended to say to you. Your presence, in fact, had overcome me, and I completely lost my self-possession. Besides, you made

me afraid of you ; and, soldier as I am, I do not feel ashamed to admit it. I am very strongly disposed to place every possible confidence in what you may say to me, should we ever meet, or in what you may write to me should we not. That I love you it is useless for you to deny, for I am convinced that you know it. Do not be surprised that I write to you, notwithstanding what you said to me on Sunday, and the resolution you expressed, of never seeing me again. Perhaps you will decline to answer this ; but I do assure you, that it is written for a purpose essentially connected with your own reputation. On this subject, so dear to me, and which ought to be a thousand times dearer to yourself, I scarcely know what to say, because I am hanging in a state of the most painful suspense between two opinions. I do not now make love to you, but simply act the part of a true and sincere friend, because I feel that such friendship is now necessary to you, although you may not be aware of that fact yourself. I have now only one favour to ask, which is, that you will, *for your own sake*, answer this note, *with your own hand*. You know not how much depends

upon this, both to you and me. It is true you may throw this letter aside—perhaps into the fire—but I entreat you not to do so until after you shall have considered it thoroughly. I do not care what the nature of your reply may be ; you see that, as *a lover*, I ask for *no* reply, because I am not making love ; but as *a friend* I do, because I wish to have it in my power to rescue you out of danger if it should be necessary—or rather if it should not be too late. If you are still safe, and free from blame or error, you will write to me ; but if not, I expect no reply, and *then* I shall urge *my* claims. I do then entreat you to answer this, even although it may be the last communication that ever should pass between us. Believe me—and I pledge myself upon my sacred honour—that there is no wile in this letter, and that it is written only for the purpose of rescuing you either from danger or from evil. Need I add, that I am

“ Yours most faithfully and sincerely,

“ ARTHUR CLINTON.”

When Maria read this strange and startling

communication, she trembled from head to foot. Except that Clinton loved, as he said, and as she herself felt, she could not at all understand it. She was, however, a clear thinking girl, and perceived at once that there must be some circumstance in connexion with herself weighing upon Clinton's mind. This was evident, even during their short interview, from the mysterious expressions which fell from him.

How, then, was she to act? Could her reputation be in danger, notwithstanding all the caution she had taken to prevent it? She had been too much excited by the visit of Doolittle to observe Miss Bennet's looks; nor had she the slightest suspicion of her diabolical iniquity. Still, on re-perusing the letter, she thought that there was a feeling of honesty and sincerity in it which could not be doubted. But perhaps it was one of those productions which accomplished gentlemen, like Clinton or Doolittle—she knew they were brother officers—were so well capable of inditing for their own purposes. She read it a third time, and thought there was something in it so remarkable and striking, and so different from the history of flames and darts,

endless love, adoration, et cetera, which she expected from him, that she determined to answer it, upon one distinct condition, which was, that she should never write to him a second time, and that he never might expect to have another interview with her. Under these circumstances, she addressed him as follows :

“SIR,—I ought not to answer your letter, and believe me that I would not have even opened it if I knew the person it came from. I cannot understand it ; it is all a mystery to me. I have done nothing that could put my reputation in danger, and, even if I did, I certainly would not call upon you to protect it. I stand in need of no protector, except *one*, and under *him* I place myself. You need not write to me again, as I will never answer another letter of yours ; and allow me to tell you that I think if you regarded my reputation, as you say, you would not visit me, nor write to me against my will, and when you must know that your visits and letters are more likely to injure that reputation than to defend it. As you are my friend, I thank you ; but as a lover of mine, you have

nothing to expect from me, but a determination to avoid you in future, and never, under any circumstances, with my own consent, to meet or converse with you again. I feel myself forced to answer your letter. You say, 'if you are still safe, and free from blame and error, you will write to me ; but if not, I expect no reply.' I do not know why you should use such language to me. Neither do I know what you mean by blame or error. I am not without either blame or error ; but I do not think I have done any thing to injure my own reputation. I have guarded against that, and always will.

“ MARIA BRINDSLEY.”

This reached him by post, and when he opened it the first thing he did was to look at the signature. Gracious heaven ! there was in the same handwriting, the name of Maria Brindsley, the diplomatist in vice—the shameless and barefaced correspondent of Captain Doolittle ! He had not yet read the letter, however ; but, in a state of frightful agitation, he tottered to a chair, sat down, and placing his

face upon his hand, he groaned, and felt his limbs twitching and shivering. At length he read it, and still examined the handwriting as he went along. It was the same, and that damning fact so thoroughly confused him, that he could not properly understand it on a first reading. He read it, however, a second time, and felt, as he had said to Maria, divided between two opinions. But now came the third and critical perusal. When he came to the words—"I stand in need of no protector but *one*, and under *him* I place myself"—he started to his feet, and walked through the room in a state of fury and agony beyond description.

"D—n her!" he exclaimed, "has she the assurance to tell me so. D—n her, I say, what is it but an admission—and an impudent admission, too—of her guilt? Yes! she *has* a protector. However, she is playing her card—I see that clearly; she would never acknowledge this if she were not disposed to come to the hammer. No matter. I will bid up to her. She admits she is under protection, and is not ashamed of it, and that is enough. Perhaps I may make her change her protector. Then look at her

caution and hypocrisy at the close. 'I do not think I have done anything to injure my reputation ; I have *guarded myself* against that, and always will.' I dare say she would—but that's a proof that she does not know the scoundrel she has to deal with. But the truth is, this after all, is only a lure. She acknowledges she is under protection. Bid higher—I see it—so I shall, my dear, and will have you, or lose a fall for it !"

From this moment forward the whole force of his mind, the utmost stretch of his ingenuity, and all his powers of calculation, were called into action for the purpose of getting the unhappy girl into his power. This, however, in consequence of the extreme propriety and prudence of her conduct, was a matter of surpassing difficulty. As we said before, all respect for her was now gone, and consequently everything like honourable forbearance. He had cast his former scruples to the winds. His great mortification then was, that Doolittle—a blockhead and a profligate—had triumphed over him ; but now he resolved, by every practicable means, to triumph over him in return.

We will not dwell here upon the many schemes and manœuvres with which he attempted to ensnare and encompass her ; because the recital of them would teach little wisdom and less moral to our readers. It is enough to say that, without being successful in any one of them, he harassed her to such a degree, that life almost became a burthen to her ; but still in proportion as difficulties presented themselves to him, so did the desperate and determined spirit which urged him on increase in activity and enterprise.

Two or three months had now elapsed since he had come to this unmanly resolution, and he was about to abandon all his plans in despair, when, at last, a very deep-laid scheme—having very much the appearance of chance—threw such an opportunity in his way as he had long been expecting. One evening Miss Travers and one or two of her young women were asked out to tea at her uncle's to meet her nephew already alluded to, who had just returned from Dublin, after having closed one season of his medical studies. This young fellow was a scamp and a scoundrel ; and by whatever means

Clinton effected it, he certainly made it a point not only to become acquainted with him, but to make him a confidant, and secure both his co-operation and connivance. This he did by promising to use the full extent of his interest and that of his family in procuring him a surgical appointment in the army. On this occasion the young fellow proposed the project, in the shape of a request, to his parents, who were tolerably respectable. To this they at once assented, having at the same time named and appointed the evening. This was all young Singleton (such was the name) wanted; for the matter was no sooner settled than he sought Clinton, to whom he communicated it with great glee.

Miss Travers on this occasion asked Maria and Miss Bennet to accompany her, but the latter, with a toss of her head and a glance of scorn at Maria, declined the invitation; and, under these circumstances Maria, who would otherwise have declined it also, felt herself reluctantly compelled to go. We need not dwell upon the manner in which the evening was spent; but we may say that the worthy nephew,

who possessed a good deal of low, rakish humour, rose very high in the opinion of his aunt, whose vanity he flattered with such a profusion of ironical compliments, that she felt herself to be indeed, what he had actually termed her, the star of the evening. Independently of this he plied her with punch so adroitly, that she began to get pathetic and sentimental, which was just the point to which he wished to bring her. He tried the same experiment on Maria, but without effect. No persuasion or argument, whether jocular or serious—and he tried both—could prevail on her to taste any description of liquor whatsoever. When they were about to separate he arose, and, with a face of comic solemnity, called upon them to fill bumpers, for that he was about to propose the respected memory of a brave gentleman who died in the service of his king and country, and who, he had no doubt, would have closed his existence in a much more exalted situation, had his very valuable and beautifully-spun thread of life not been cut short as it was. He would then propose the memory of *Captain* Thadeus M'Scent (the *Captain* was in compliment to his aunt), to be drank in silence and a bumper.

Miss Travers rapidly finished hers—gave three or four violent sobs, and immediately went off into high hysterics—which interesting scene closed the amusements of the evening, and when she had sufficiently recovered, they prepared to take their departure.

Now, there was a young fellow there, with a strong English accent, who paid particular attention to Maria—that is to say, as far as her very reserved manner would permit him, which, indeed, was not far. To this person Singleton consigned her, an arrangement to which, as the young man had been civil and respectful enough, she could possibly feel no objection. There was, however, another reason for her acquiescence. Miss Travers had once more got loquacious and important, but Maria could remark that she occasionally slurred her words somewhat thickly together ; and that her precious nephew, whilst he looked very knowing, seemed to think that he himself was the most proper person to conduct her home. She, Maria, consequently fell to the protection of the stranger.

It was now, however, that her companion began to speak with more significance. He

asked her was she fond of the army ? a very general and comprehensive question, certainly—to which she replied that she was not ; that above all other professions of life, she loathed it. He said he was glad to hear it, and added that he himself was then on the look out for a wife, but that it was a rather difficult matter to find such a girl as he could conscientiously approve of. He had, however, known a good deal of military life, and been aware of the fact that many humble girls had been made comfortable—in truth, placed in a state of luxury and independence, by the liberality of young and handsome military men, with whom, indeed, they lived in a state of the greatest affection and happiness, and from whom they sometimes derived a very handsome annual income. These instances, however, were rare exceptions, he added, but still they occurred—only in cases, however, where the young ladies happened to be extremely beautiful, and alive to their own interests.

“ This is a subject, sir,” replied Maria, who began to feel uncomfortable, “ which I beg you to discontinue ; let us walk a little faster—we are falling behind our friends too far.”

"I know we are," he replied ; and it is from a principle of delicacy towards Miss Travers that we ought to keep back. Poor Miss Travers ! what a very weak head she has."

They had now come to the corner of a remote street, down which they were to turn towards the right, but straight before them was a road with a hedge on one side and a dead wall on the other. The corner house at which they were to turn seemed to be uninhabited and ruinous, as was evident by its want of doors and windows. Maria, for some time past, had been anxious to overtake Miss Travers and her cousin, whilst her companion, upon the strength of the argument we have mentioned, made such an appeal to her delicacy as she could not readily overcome. Independently of her natural timidity, however she felt no personal apprehension from the man, nor were there grounds for supposing that she had any possible reason to do so.

Having arrived at the corner already mentioned, her companion said hastily :—

"Well, Miss Brindsley, I must wish you a good night, for the truth is, I have outstaid my time, but I trust you will excuse me,—you will

find Miss Travers and her nephew on before you ; I wish you good night !” and with these words he immediately disappeared.

The night was exceedingly dark ; Maria was very ignorant of the town, and on looking down the street she could see nothing in human shape. For a moment she started at the man’s sudden and unexpected disappearance, her impression being that he would certainly have seen her home ; she experienced a certain degree of terror, and was about to proceed at a brisk pace after Miss Travers when all at once she found herself seized from behind, her arms tightly pinioned, and something like a soft silk handkerchief stuffed into her mouth, so as to effectually prevent her from calling for assistance. In this condition she was conveyed along the dark road, which ran forward between the hedge and the wall with such velocity of motion, that her feet only touched the ground from time to time. Not only was she literally gagged, but her eyes were also blindfolded by the same act, so that had it been even light, she could have seen nothing. The terror, nay, the horror of the act, sudden and outrageous as it was, would at any

time probably have overcome her, but on this occasion the attempt to suppress her screams was little less than actual suffocation, and it was perceived by the falling down of her head that she had become insensible. They now took the handkerchief off her mouth, and immediately a hackney carriage was driven up, into which one of them, having taken her in his arms, entered with her, having previously, it is to be supposed, given proper instructions to the driver. The person who entered with her expressed much alarm in consequence of his apprehension that they might have, in point of fact, suffocated her, and he consequently let down the windows of the carriage in order to give her air.

“Heavens,” he exclaimed, “if she should be dead—then I have murdered her, and will surrender myself to justice, let the consequence be what it may,—but I am mad—she has driven me to desperation, yes, she has made me mad. Oh, would to God that she was pure and unsullied—that she had not fallen into the hands of that unprincipled profligate ; if she had not, I should never have had recourse to such a scoundrelly measure as this.—Miss Brindsley !

Miss Brindsley!—make an effort and rouse yourself ; for the sake of heaven make an effort, or I shall go distracted—mad ; that is, if I be not so already.”

Maria just then recovered, and found herself lying in his arms and upon his bosom, but in an instant, and with more strength than she could be supposed to possess, she broke from him, and threw herself on the opposite seat.

“Coachman !” she called aloud, “coachman ! if you be a man—an Irishman, or a Christian, come to my assistance ; I have been forced into this coach by violence—for the sake of God, and as you hope for salvation, come to my assistance.” She then screamed loudly, crying, “help, help, help, I am forcibly taken away !”

“It is quite useless, my dear Miss Brindsley,” replied Clinton, whose voice she at once recognized, “there is nobody within hearing but the driver, and he is my creature. I have paid him well for this, but allow me to say that you need feel no apprehension. You ought to know that I am a gentleman, and that I mean neither rudeness nor violence ; all I want is to have a conversation with you. I have made many

attempts to see you and to reason with you, in order that we might understand one another. This opportunity we must and shall have this night, for I cannot bear any longer the state of distraction to which you have brought me."

The only reply Maria made to this was an attempt to escape by one of the windows, but she found, to her inexpressible terror, that he had closed them both the moment he felt that she had recovered. She then once more called the driver to her aid, and finding that he made no reply, screamed a second time for assistance.

"Miss Brindsley," said Clinton, in a voice of the most desperate determination, amounting almost to fury, "by that Being who has created us both, you shall not leave my hands until we have a full and complete explanation. Do not imagine that I am ignorant of your conduct with others—I have seen the proof of it,—be assured of that, and you may take my word for it that candour and common sense will be your best game with me to night. I speak this to save both time and trouble, and in order that you may understand me. As for me, I understand you thoroughly."

Maria once more called upon the coachman, and once more attempted the windows, but with no effect in either case. The coachman only lashed his horses into a more rapid pace, and Clinton firmly but gently forced her back from the windows, which, as she had never been in such a carriage before, she knew not at any rate how to open. At length she spoke—

“Mr. Clinton, I will make a proposal to you, —you say you wish for some explanation from me, and you use language which I do not and cannot understand.”

“A proposal!” thought Clinton,—“Ay,” he proceeded to himself, “I thought it would come to this.” “Well Miss Brindsley,” he said aloud, “pray let us hear your proposal ; depend upon it you will find me both liberal and gentlemanly in the estimate which I form of your value,—speak out freely then, and let us understand each other at once.”

“Then my proposal is this : Bring me immediately home safe and without insult, and as you say you wish for an explanation, I promise solemnly, that if you call at Miss Travers’s to-morrow, I will give you all the explanation I can afford.”

"No," he replied, "I have you now in my power, and I tell you at once, that out of my hands you will not get this night, until every mystery is set aside between us."

"Mystery ! sir ; what mystery ? There can be no mystery between you and me."

"But I tell you there is, Miss Brindsley ; a deep—a dark—a terrible mystery ; but it matters not ; it shall be cleared up this night, or I shall know for what. In the meantime we shall proceed quietly to a certain house whither I am conducting you, and when there, we shall probably come to understand each other."

Poor Maria, though naturally modest and diffident, was possessed, notwithstanding, of a great and courageous spirit, especially on severe and trying occasions—a faculty of which she was not then aware herself, because she never had before been thrown into any of those unexpected and oppressive difficulties of life that were calculated to call it forth. From the distracted manner of her companion she felt that there was some undefinable ordeal before her, but of what nature it could be she was completely ignorant. Still as they went along

in silence she began to suspect that all this agitation on the part of Clinton was assumed for some fearful purpose, and that he was only lashing himself up into a fury—or rather pretending to do so—in order to cover himself from the disgrace of some act of cool and deliberate violence. In this mood of mind she offered up a silent prayer to God, imploring his protection and assistance.

In the course of about fifteen minutes they came to a gate, being apparently the entrance to the residence of some private gentleman, as might be inferred from the smooth rolling of the carriage-wheels over the fine gravel of what must have been an avenue.

“Now, Miss Brindsley,” said he, as they approached the house, “there is no person here to protect you, or who can render you any assistance ; it will, therefore, be quite useless for you to cry out or make any noise. You will come into the dining-room with me ; the house is unoccupied ; the family, intimate friends of mine, have gone to the continent last week, and there is no person here but a deaf and stupid old woman, who believes that you were my wife,

and that it is not her business to come in our way unless she is called upon to attend us, as it were. Pray, mark those words, and observe them ; all I want with you is a candid confession of your conduct."

"Mr. Clinton," replied Maria, "this is an outrage unworthy of you and your respectable family ; but mark me, sir, you probably forget that we live in a country where there are laws to protect the defenceless, and to punish those who break through and despise them. If you attempt any rudeness or violence against me this night, I will appeal to the laws of my country and have you both exposed and punished."

"I intend nothing of the kind, Miss Brindley ; I may be a madman, but I am not a ruffian ; as I told you before, all I want is to have every thing cleared up between us. What I wish is, that you will be candid and tell me the truth. Now, let me help you out, and I am glad that the night is so dark, for this man who drives the chaise will not know you."

"I will not leave this carriage," she replied,

determinedly, "except through brute violence, unless you will pledge your honour, in the name of God and your family—on whom there never was a stain or the shadow of disgrace—that you will return me safe and free from insult to my own residence."

"I pledge myself both to God and the honour of my family, that I will not render you the slightest personal violence ; and that if I offend you at all it will be only in attempting to—to—to reason with you ; and, perhaps, by inducing you to listen to reason ; but no personal violence. Good God ! in my worst mood I never was capable of that ; you *may* have confidence in me, Miss Brindsley."

He then helped her out of the chaise, and as he did he felt her to be in such a state of trepidation as made him feel something like remorse for his conduct ; but then there were the two letters and the indenture of the handwriting ; and was not any girl capable of writing such a letter to Doolittle, capable of acting the part of hypocrisy which she had assumed. This, to be sure, was the argument of his grosser passions, but, nevertheless, he felt even at that

moment the influence of a better spirit and a purer affection within him. They then came out of the carriage and entered the house together.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RESULT OF THE ABDUCTION—MISS TRAVERS'S VANITY
DOES MUCH MISCHIEF — MISS BENNET SEEN IN AN AWK-
WARD POSITION.

AN old, stupid-looking woman opened the door for them, and showed them into the dining-room, where there were refreshments laid out, precisely as if they had been expected. This startled Maria, and it seemed to her like a troubled dream, but she could not understand it.

“Now, my dear Miss Brindsley,” said Clinton, “you have, I know, every reason to feel alarm and agitation ; of course you will admit the necessity of some refreshment ; allow me to help you to a glass of wine.”

“No, sir,” said she, “nothing of the kind will pass my lips to-night. Only, I entreat you, that whatever you have to say to me you will say it quickly, and conduct me home again with as little delay as possible. What must they think at Miss Travers's of my absence, or how will I

account for it? If you respected me, Mr. Clinton, you would not treat as you have done."

"I *did* respect you, Maria—I will call you so—and I loved you besides, God only knows how well and how sincerely."

"And pray, what did I ever do to cause me the loss of your respect?"—she did not add love.

Clinton swallowed a glass of wine, and looked her sternly and severely in the face.

"Can *you* ask me such a question," said he, in return. "What has been your intimacy with Captain Doolittle?"

"Captain Doolittle!" said she, astonished. "Why, I know not the man—I never spoke to him."

"Did he never write to you?"

"He did. The servant told me that a letter she brought up came from Captain Doolittle; I wrote upon the back of it—'*returned with indignation and scorn*;' but I did not even open it; I laid it on the chimney-piece, when called by Miss Travers to furnish some accounts, which I am in the habit of doing, and when I returned to my room the letter was gone, and I never saw it since; neither could I return it

to him unopened as I had intended ; some person must certainly have stolen it."

"God bless me !" thought Clinton, "how beautifully she fences ; there is no touching her. Well, but Miss Brindsley, did you never meet this man ? upon the N——y road, say ?"

"Never in my life, Mr. Clinton."

"Nor he never called upon you ?"

"He did, some time ago, but I refused to see him."

"Ah, he was imprudent to call upon you *there* ; but now, Miss Brindsley, allow me to tell you—and I assure you it is very painful to me—that I do not believe one word of what you have uttered ; you *have* seen him, you *have* had assignations with him, and—and—I need not add what I had intended to say—I saw your own letter to him, appointing a meeting, and soliciting his protection, for it bore no other construction. Now the letter you sent him and that you sent me are both written by the same hand. What have you to say to that fact ?"

"I have to say this"—and as she spoke, she started indignantly to her feet—"that if Captain Doolittle can produce a letter, as coming

from me, either he is one of the most unprincipled villains that ever lived on earth, or that he has been misled, and the letter is a forgery."

Clinton paused for a minute or two ; but the man was jealous, and, as Shakspeare has said :

"Trifles, light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ."

There were the two letters, unquestionably written by the same hand. Doolittle was a knowing and a practised rake, and had prepared her for such an encounter as this.

"Did you not admit," said he, "in your reply to my letter, that you had *one* protector in whom you could trust ? How will you answer that, Miss Brindsley ?"

"Sir," she replied, and the tears burst from her eyes, "the protector I meant in my letter to you was—*the Almighty God.*"

Clinton for a moment felt as if he had got an electric shock ; he was awed, he was subdued for a time : but of all passions which agitate and agonize the human heart, there is none so difficult to eradicate out of it as jea-

lousy This, he thought upon a little reflection, was all very fine—but there were the accursed letters. That allusion to Almighty God was a beautiful escape—one, indeed, which none but an exceedingly clever creature could make ; and then he looked at her—she was in tears ; her face was flushed into the most tempting and inexpressible beauty—in fact, the sensual devil became strong in him, and he changed his tactics. He represented to her how happy they might be together ; she had been his first love, he said ; he loved her still, he would continue to love her, only let her make herself worthy of it ; he would provide for her ; he would take her out of the wretched condition of life in which she was placed. The provision he would make for her would be for life. Let her think of the change which the acceptance of this proposal would effect in her circumstances. And in order to satisfy her that there was neither fraud nor delusion in his intentions, he would have the settlement regularly and properly drawn up by a solicitor of respectability and eminence, and if she wished, she herself might choose the man.

Maria rose up, and her face became flushed with a resentment so deep that for a short time she could not utter a syllable ; her breast heaved with the indignation which was pent up within it, burning to escape in words. At length she spoke.

“ So sir,” she proceeded, “ this then was the explanation you wanted ! this was your unmanly and dishonourable object in dragging me by brutal power and violence to this lonely place, to offer me those vile and profligate proposals ! You have made, however, a great and grievous mistake ; I am not such a person as you suspect me to be. I am an humble, but, thank God, a virtuous girl, and sooner than consent to the abominable offers which you are not ashamed to make me, I would beg my bread from house to house, or lie down behind a ditch and breathe out my last gasp with an unsullied conscience under the open sky of heaven.”

“ Ah !” said he, “ I see clearly that you never loved me.”

“ Loved you ! did I ever say that I did, sir ?

“ No, but I thought I read it in your eyes. You love another, however, that is a clear case.”

“No sir, there you are again mistaken. I say, in the presence of God, that I do *not* love another. But ask yourself what the proof of my love is, which you are ungenerous enough to require from me. To throw myself into a life of shame and infamy, not to gratify your love, but your base and profligate passions, to enable you to boast to your fellow profligates, that you have me as your kept mistress. But Mr. Clinton, understand me once for all. You ask me to become your kept mistress ; now, so far from that, I declare most solemnly, that knowing your principles as I do, I would not, even should you gain the consent of your whole family to it, become your wife, much less your mistress. Now sir, I have said all I intend to say, I have given you the only explanation I can give—and if there has been a mystery between us, I trust I have cleared it up. At present all I have to ask of you is, that you will conduct me safely and honourably home, and may God forgive you for your conduct to me this night ! It may be the means of destroying the reputation of an innocent and well-conducted girl.”

There was a burning and indignant spirit of severity in her words, a tone of such high principle and pure morality, such an unquestionable consciousness of offended chastity, that Clinton was mute, and felt himself incapable of making any reply. He walked about the room, and said to himself, "What if I have been mistaken after all, or rather somehow misled ; but then, there are the hints thrown out by Miss Travers, and who appeared to allude to them with reluctance, and as if she did not wish to compromise or injure the character of this girl. We know it is true how those ladies can act their part when in a crisis like this. Perhaps, after all, this scene may be an excellent jest between her and Doolittle. I believe that once a woman throws off the principles of virtue, she sticks at nothing—not even at the most solemn oaths when they are necessary to protect her from suspicion—yes, and even when their hearts are as corrupt as hell itself, or the festering worm that crawls upon the carrion. Well, I will bring her home, safe too, and without offence, but I shall not give her up yet. I shall sift her character thoroughly, and satisfy my-

self as to whether I am right or wrong in my suspicions, if, after the letters I have seen, I can call them such."

"Miss Brindsley," said he, "your wishes shall be complied with. I shall conduct you safely home; but you think too much of the world, and of the opinions of the world. What is the world to us but a blank, unless we can enjoy ourselves, and take as much pleasure as we can out of it?"

"Alas, sir," she replied, "I admit it is an unjust world. You, and such as you, may seduce and destroy, and the world rather applauds than condemns you; but how does the opinion of that world act upon your victims? It spares not them, whilst the authors of their ruin and the principals in their crime go through society boasting of their triumphs, instead of being ashamed of them; whilst the wretched being whom you have brought to vice and infamy, goes down, step after step, to the lowest depth of profligacy, and sin, and misery. Sir, I beg you to bring me home."

"Can this be hypocrisy;" thought Clinton, "where did or could this girl have got such

sentiment or such language—language so much above her education and condition of life ? Well, I shall see into that too, yet how many of them are clever and fluent as a summer stream ? Oh, if I find that she is unstained and pure, what shall I do ? I know not, but I will think of it, but first for the scrutiny—the investigation into her private life ; I shall leave no person acquainted with her unexamined ; I shall either prove her to be as white and pure as the unsullied snow, or as black and hypocritical as perdition itself, and all that belongs to it.”

“ Now, Miss Brindsley,” said he, “ I am ready to conduct you home.”

“ Thank you, sir,” she replied, “ these are the only agreeable words I’ve heard from your lips to-night.” In a few moments they were on their way to the house of Miss Travers.

Both, as they went along, were full of their own thoughts, and they spoke but little. Maria was silent and still, but Clinton, although he directed scarcely any conversation to her, was evidently in a state of the most indescribable anxiety. He sighed deeply, and even groaned with what might be well termed anguish.

“Why is it that I feel this interest in you?” said he, “why is it that you deprive me of my sleep at night? By heavens, Maria, you are the whole world to me. Night and day, morning, noon, and evening, you are the sole subject of my thoughts. But I am in torture—oh, if I can find you what I would fain hope; but what I fear—I dread that I cannot, there would not exist on the surface of this earth so happy a man. I would give millions if my love for you were boundless and without suspicion.”

“I do not wish to encourage your love, sir,” she replied, “if love it be, but I would go any length to relieve myself from your suspicions—your most unjust suspicions.”

He made no reply to this, and they drove on in silence until they came pretty near Maria's home. At this moment another hackney coach drove up to them, proceeding in the same direction. The persons inside appeared to be evidently in great good humour. They laughed and chatted, and to the surprise of Clinton, he at once recognised the voice of Doolittle. He pulled the string and whispered the driver to stop, which he did. It was obvious that their

own carriage had not been perceived by Doolittle and his companion, otherwise they would not have talked so loudly.

"Remain here for a few minutes," said Clinton, springing out, "I must ascertain what Doolittle is about. It is no good I know, but I shall watch him and see where he goes to."

He accordingly followed the other carriage, and to his astonishment saw that it stopped at Miss Travers's house.

The night, we have observed, was very dark, and he had little difficulty in edging up close to the door, where he stood with his back against the wall in such a position that it was difficult if not impossible to see him. At length the carriage drove up and stopped at the door, and Doolittle handed his lady out.

"Now," said he, "my darling Maria, I must tear myself from you," and as he spoke he kissed her several times,—adding "good night now, my dear Miss Brindsley,—good night, and do not forget to dream of me."

"Go now," she replied, "You are a naughty man, why did you make me so fond of you?"

She then walked over, and deliberately apply-

ing a latch-key to the door, let herself in, and closed it very quietly. Doolittle's carriage drove away at a rapid rate, and Clinton, thunderstruck at what had happened, hastened to Maria, and immediately mentioned what he had heard.

"Have you," he asked, "a sister in that establishment?"

"No sir," she replied, "I am an only child."

"But do you know who the girl is that was in the hackney coach with him?"

"Unfortunately I do," she replied; "she is a young woman from Dublin who conducts Miss Travers's business, and the only enemy I have in the house."

"By heavens then," he exclaimed, "all is now clear, my beloved girl; she has corresponded with him in your name, and passes herself on him for you."

The probability of this instantly struck Maria, especially when she thought of the purloined letter; but as her principal object now was to free herself from Clinton and get home, she requested him to leave her. Clinton felt a new light stream in upon his soul. He was in raptures, and so completely absorbed by the

accidental discovery he had made, that he felt himself incapacitated from holding any conversation upon the subject. He then bade her good night, entered the carriage, and immediately drove home.

There is not a virtue in this world rarer or more beneficial to ourselves than candour, especially when exercised at our own expense. It is, indeed, only another name for truth, and we trust our readers are already aware that our heroine was truth itself. The next morning Maria told Miss Travers that she wished to have a few minutes' private conversation with her, as she had something, she said, very particular, if not painful, to mention. Accordingly, after breakfast, when the parlour was left to themselves, she gave her a full and complete detail of all that had occurred to her on the preceding night, by no means suppressing the nature of the base and offensive proposals which Clinton had made to her ; and whilst she dwelt upon this part of the narrative, her face flushed, and the tears of indignation streamed down her cheeks. Miss Travers seemed equally affected, but in somewhat of a different spirit, although

Maria by no means understood the distinction. On the contrary, when her auditor coloured, and flapped her face with her handkerchief in a state of resentment which surpassed her own, she imputed it all to the simple and becoming sympathy of virtuous indignation. As she went on with the narrative she was in the beginning interrupted only by ejaculations, such as "Ah!—dear me,—bless my soul;" but when she came to Clinton's professions of love, and the dishonourable offers he had made her, the flame which had been smouldering broke out, and raged with a fury which astonished even Maria herself.

"False, base, treacherous villain,—to treat me thus!"

"*You*, Miss Travers?" exclaimed Maria, struck very naturally with amazement at such words, "you? why it is of myself that I am speaking."

"Yes Maria, I know that, but it is of myself that *I* am *thinking*. That profligate,—for such I *now* find he is, has been in love with *me* for a considerable time past, and has avowed his affection for me in this very room—upon his bended knees, ay, and with the tears in his eyes too."

“And what did you say to him?” asked Maria, astonished, and more than astonished, for she felt the very heart within her sink on hearing this fresh instance of her lover’s profligacy.

“What did I say to him? why I told him that I would not give him an answer for some time; that I had heard unfavourable accounts of him with respect to women, but that out of consideration for his youth I would put him on his good behaviour, if I found that he reformed—had ceased to be a rake, and become a respectable moral character, I might give him an answer—upon which, Maria, he seized me in his arms, kissed me passionately, said I was his first love, (I thought of poor Thady then,) and that if he did not marry me, he would never marry another; and he did all this so rapidly and in such a state of excitement, that I had not time to prevent him.”

Maria’s face became the hue of ashes on hearing this exposition of Clinton’s principles.

“He is indeed,” she replied, “a thorough profligate.”

“Yes, Maria,” said Miss Travers, “I *now* see that he is—there is no doubt of that;—unfor-

tunate and misguided youth, if he had only been constant to his *first* love—if he had only been——”

Here her feelings completely overpowered her, she sobbed and became every whit as hysterical as if every syllable of her own narrative had been truth itself. Indeed we dare say, and we *do* say, that her hysterics were strong precisely in proportion to its falsehood. May the sex forgive us for this bit of moral anatomy, which they wont. In fact, she completely turned the tables on Maria, who having expected sympathy from the old sempstress, found herself called upon to bestow it. She took her in her arms, held up her head, fanned her face, wiped her eyes, and kept comforting and supporting her until she gave that last peculiar and well-managed sob, which seems to bring the necessary relief, and winds up the fit. Lord help us! what a world it is,—but they are all angels of some sort or other.

When the explanations on both sides were complete, Maria told her she was going out for a little, but would return in less than an hour. This in a moment excited her jealousy.

"Going out !" she exclaimed ; " not to meet him I hope ; you have never been in the habit of going out—at least by yourself. I insist Maria on knowing where you are going to."

" I am going," replied Maria, " to the Rev. Dr. Spillar, who, they say, is a learned and pious man."

" And pray, what brings you to him ?"

" To ask his advice," she replied ; " to tell him what I have just told you, and to ask his protection besides, and that he might use his influence with Mr. Clinton, in order to prevent him from annoying me, or injuring my character by attempting to see or speak to me. It is an easy thing to injure the character of a poor unprotected girl like me."

" I hope you will say nothing about me, Maria," said Miss Travers. " But I know you are a girl of great good sense and prudence, and would mention nothing to my disadvantage. Indeed, if Clinton were to renew his proposals to me to-morrow, as it is not improbable that he may, I do not think I would have him. I shall never marry a false-hearted man. Ah, poor Thady ! There was constancy, Maria.

How soon he abandoned Ellen Comerford when he saw me—heigho !”

Maria, until this interview with Miss Travers, had believed and hoped that Clinton, notwithstanding his violence in taking her away the night before, was not altogether devoid of honour or principle. His conduct, however, with respect to Miss Travers, satisfied her that he was nothing more or less than a most licentious debauchee ; and although the discovery was a bitter one, yet she was glad it had been made, because it opened her eyes to his true character, and enabled her to understand his hypocrisy and falsehood, and to estimate his professions at their proper value.

On reaching Dr. Spillar’s house, she was shown into the front parlour, where the learned and reverend gentleman soon joined her. We will not recapitulate the circumstances with which our readers are already acquainted, but simply say that she recited with candour, yet not without embarrassment and many blushes, the whole history of Clinton’s conduct towards her. The Doctor heard her calmly, and whenever she seemed to shrink from the most painful

portions of the task she had imposed on herself, he encouraged her with much kindness, and drew her gently on into a complete narrative of the truth.

“ Well, my dear,” said the amiable and simple-hearted old gentleman, “ I am very sorry to hear the tale which you have told me. I do not doubt your truth, because I read truth in every lineament of your face. I am sorry on this young man’s account, but still more so upon yours. His family were honourable, generous, and high-minded ; but now, may I ask why you have confided this distressing history to me ?”

“ Sir,” she replied, “ my reason for doing so is this : in the first place, if you should hear those circumstances mentioned to my disadvantage, or in any manner misrepresented to the injury of my character, that you should know the truth ; and in the next, that you would be good enough to see Mr. Clinton, and to let him feel that any attempt on his part to see me or to speak to me will be of no earthly use to himself, but may be ruinous to my good name. This, sir, is the reason why I have called upon you ; this, and a wish to ask you, as a pious

and learned clergyman, to protect me as far as you can."

"And I shall, my poor child, as far as I can. I will see Mr. Clinton—I will reason with him, and it shall go hard, or I will make him ashamed of his proceedings. Dear me, I did not expect such unjustifiable conduct as this from any of his family; but do not be alarmed, my child. I will take care that he shall not again either annoy or distress you. If my influence over him should fail, I shall see his colonel on the subject. But alas! now that I think of it, the colonel himself—an old bachelor by the way—has the reputation of being a greater profligate in *that* way than any of the officers under him. My dear child, I find military men very illiterate in general, and above all subjects do I find them deficient in a knowledge of history. Are you fond of history?

"I don't know, sir. I have very little time for reading; and I don't think that ever any work upon history came in my way. I am fond of reading; but Sunday is the only day left to me to read anything."

"Well, my dear," said he, "above all things

read history. You will find it agreeable and amusing ; quite a recreation for a young woman like you. Now, God bless you, my child. Put your trust in Him, and don't suffer yourself to be tempted by such persons as Mr. Clinton, or the base proposals he may make you. Think and reflect that you must appear before your Almighty Judge with a soul pure and unspotted."

"It is only on God," replied Maria, "that I rely ; and next to him, on you, who are his minister. I trust, sir, you will protect me as far as you possibly can, and that you will prevent Lieutenant Clinton from making my life wretched and unhappy."

"Depend upon me," he replied, "I shall not neglect the task—but it is none—which you have asked me to perform. If he should continue to annoy you, let me know without loss of time."

We have said, a few pages back, that truth and candour constitute the safest principle of conduct in life, even where circumstances may appear to be against ourselves. In the course of that day, Maria experienced the justness of

this observation. On her way to Dr. Spillar's and on her return from the interview she had with him, she felt deeply and deplorably wretched. The lying—or rather, the exaggerated—revelations which Miss Travers had made concerning the character of Clinton, taught her, with painful and agonizing effect, that she had set her affections upon a rake and a reprobate of the worst character. She thought she saw in his conduct towards her, on the preceding night, gleams of honour and manifestations of affection which could not be mistaken. Her conversation with Miss Travers, however, set all that to rest. He was merely one of those unprincipled seducers of whom she had heard, and who sacrifice truth, honour, and conscience to effect their object. Perhaps there is not in the whole history of human feeling a state of mind, especially in matters of love—for we place the death of our nearest relations out of the question—so severe and distressing upon the heart as the discovery that we have placed our affections upon a vile and worthless object. The revulsion of feeling which it produces rends the very heart asunder, and can only be

illustrated by the terrific agony which a trusting and affectionate husband feels on discovering that the wife of his bosom has been faithless to his bed. Maria, in fact, was wretched, and returned home pale and with every appearance of melancholy and distress. And yet we may ask, why all this suffering? She knew and felt that she could never be married to Clinton; she knew and felt that she possessed the power and the virtue to resist all his solicitations; and that, in point of fact, she ought to look upon him as a being so far removed from her, that there could be nothing common to either in their destiny, unless mere existence. Still, we may ask, why did she feel the discovery of his perfidy and profligacy with such indescribable anguish? Simply because she loved him deeply and devotedly.

In the meantime, and during her absence at Dr. Spillar's, a scene took place between Miss Bennet and Miss Travers, which we are called upon to place on record. This, indeed, was a busy and an agitating day with Miss Travers. Miss Bennet accidentally saw Maria going out; and as there are no persons so jealous as those who are themselves conscious of

secret guilt, she took it for granted that she was following up the proceedings of the foregoing night. She had heard Maria's knock, who, poor girl, was not furnished with a latch-key for that unusual hour, and, as the proverb has it—"measured her neighbour's corn in her own bushel." She, too, begged to have a private interview with Miss Travers, which, of course, was granted, and the parlour became the scene of the following dialogue. Miss Bennet, bridling, commences it :

"Miss Travers, I trust I have conducted your very respectable establishment ever since my arrival here entirely to your satisfaction"—(a lofty consciousness of merit and professional accomplishments displayed).

"Why, indeed," replied Miss Travers, with a great deal of offended dignity, "it so happens that I conduct my own establishment, Miss Bennet. A forewoman I must certainly have, because I cannot myself be everywhere, nor attend to everything at the same time."

"Nor understand the new fashions without my assistance," added Miss Bennet, with peculiar bitterness.

"But I do not find it necessary that Miss Brindsley should correct your blunders occasionally," retorted Miss Travers, ironically.

"She has too many errors of her own to correct, if she would do it," replied the other.

"Not in her business, Miss Bennet."

"No, but in her conduct, which is worse," returned the other. "The truth is, Miss Travers, I am here to inform you that you must part either with Miss Brindsley or me. I do not feel that it is either safe or creditable to live in the same house with her, and I am resolved not to do it."

"Pray, why so, may I ask?"

"She cannot be a safe companion to any young woman here," continued Miss Bennet, "or any person who is engaged in an intrigue with Captain Doolittle."

"With Captain Doolittle!" exclaimed her companion, starting. "I rather think you are mistaken, Miss Bennet."

"I rather think I am not," replied the other; "she gives him secret meetings—nightly meetings—improper meetings—guilty meetings; and you cannot expect any proper girl to live in

the same house with her. I know, for my part, I wont."

"But what is your authority for this serious charge against the girl?"

"I am not at liberty just now to state my authority, but I can assure you she was out with him last night."

"I know you are mistaken there, at all events, at least I think—but indeed it is a very difficult thing to know some people," she added.

"Ask Becky," continued the forewoman, "whether she did not let her in late last night. In fact, Miss Travers, I considered it my duty to you, and to the high respectability of your establishment, to make you acquainted with the impropriety of her conduct. Her remaining here will ruin you both in reputation and circumstances; and of course you must feel that it is your duty to part with her; if not, you part with me."

"But I don't wish to part with either of you," replied Miss Travers.

"You must, however," said the other. "I have now put you on your guard, and I will give you till to-morrow to make up your mind on the

subject. If she remains here I go ; and now I leave you to think of it."

There ran such an indignant spirit of offended virtue through this complaint, that Miss Travers felt puzzled, and began to doubt whether Maria had not artfully misled her, and that the confession of her last night's adventure was resorted to as a ruse to meet discovery. Yet surely she could not think so. There was too much sincerity in Maria's words, and especially in her tears, to justify this ungenerous suspicion against her ; and then there was the fact of her visit to Dr. Spillar, and her determination to place herself under his protection. No, it could not be ; the charge must be false ; and besides, she knew that Miss Bennet was her bitter enemy. On the other hand, how could she dare to make such a dreadful charge if she were not in a condition to sustain it ? Well, she would think it over, and in the course of the evening, consult Betty M'Clean upon the subject ; for notwithstanding the squalls that occasionally took place between them, she seldom took any important step without the advice and counsel of this honest but somewhat fiery confidant.

CHAPTER X.

AN EXPLANATION, SATISFACTORY TO ONE PARTY, BUT WORM-
WOOD TO ANOTHER—MARIA CONSENTS TO SEE HER LOVER.

THE next morning Clinton, anxious to sound Doolittle upon the proceedings of the previous night, paid that swaggering gentleman an early visit.

"Well, Dooly," said he, "how do you get on with your intrigue? Prosperously, of course."

"Prosperously, of course—to be sure—you have said it.

'She's all my fancy painted her,
She's charming, she's divine'—

The Brindsley I mean. My seraph—my Maria."

"Do you seriously say you had the young woman, Maria Brindsley, out with you last night?"

"I do my boy, not a doubt of it."

"You utter a falsehood, sir," replied Clinton.

"A falsehood! Clinton. This to me?"

"Yes, Doolittle, to your teeth I pronounce it a falsehood—an unmanly falsehood."

"Oh, ho ! but I suppose you know what this language must end in? That is giving me the lie, Clinton."

"Unquestionably ; so I mean it. You assert that you had the girl called Maria Brindsley out with you last night, do you not ?"

"Most certainly I do."

"Then that, I say, is a lie ; nothing more nor less, for I know it to be such."

"Clinton, go and get a friend ; no man shall give me the lie with impunity. There remains now only one way of settling this affair."

"Sir, it remains for you to apologize for basely and unjustly slurring the reputation of a virtuous and innocent girl—a girl to whom you never spoke ; but pardon me—I forget myself—I should have been cooler. You are imposed upon, you are egregiously misled, and I will prove it to your satisfaction."

"That cannot be possible ; I have her letters, signed Maria Brindsley."

"Yes, you have, signed Maria Brindsley, but not *by* Maria Brindsley I say, then, let mat-

ters rest as they are until to-morrow, and if I don't distinctly prove that you are imposed upon, I pledge myself, as an officer and a gentleman, that I will be as ready to give you the usual satisfaction as you can be to demand it."

"Very well, then, be it so. I know I often draw the long bow, but in this I told you no deliberate falsehood, Clinton."

"Well, then, we shall see more of this to-morrow. I will call in upon you about twelve o'clock, and you will come whither I shall conduct you. If I find I have done you injustice, I shall apologize as a gentleman of spirit ought to do; if not, no apology; and so good-bye until then."

"But stay a moment; you seem to feel a particular interest in this girl, whilst, in the meantime, the devil a bit of interest she seems to feel in you."

"She is under the protection of my mother, Mr. Doolittle, and on that account, I shall have her neither calumniated nor misrepresented; she is an orphan, too, and has, besides, in right of the interest which my mother takes in her welfare, a double claim upon me, as my mother's son and a gentleman."

"Any other motives, Clinton ; eh ?"

"Yes ; my personal respect for her."

"Any other ? you don't stop there, I presume."

"I have nothing further to say, but that I shall call upon you to-morrow at twelve o'clock, and I am much mistaken or you will have your eyes opened, and find that you have been the dupe of an artful woman—hacknied, I apprehend, in the profligacy of Dublin life, and life, too, of not the most respectable character in the world. Now good-bye again ; I have not time to stop, but be ready to-morrow at twelve. For, mark me, I shall make a dash ; I fling scruples and delicacy to the winds. The character of an innocent, virtuous, and most beautiful girl is at stake, and I shall see justice rendered to her."

He abruptly left Doolittle, who wished to tease him a little more upon the subject, and returned to his own room.

Now, to render Doolittle justice, we must say, that out of the subject of gallantry, he was as thick-headed a blockhead as you might meet of a summer's day. Miss Bennet, in Maria's name, had gained a partial ascendancy over him—or

rather had become a kind of favourite—for the man was so utterly devoid of feeling, and of such empty and licentious levity, that he was incapable, like every man of his class, of entertaining a serious regard for any woman. Men of his calibre never fall in love ; they do not understand the sentiment ; their object is only to gratify their passions, and that accomplished, they pass to new pursuits of the same character. Doolittle then was really taken in by Miss Bennet, who actually imposed herself on him as the innocent heroine of our story. As for him he knew very little of either of them, and took it for granted that whatever Miss Bennet told him was true. He, consequently, never suspected the imposture, and gave himself no trouble whatsoever about it. With regard to what he was told by the sextoness, Miss Bennet assured him, that the simple woman had merely made a mistake in bestowing wrong names upon the parties, supposing that her name was Bennet and that of Maria, Brindsley—the fact being precisely the reverse ; than which to Doolittle, who never was remarkable for penetration, nothing seemed more probable, and so

he was artfully led into the error. Both girls were beautiful; and although he would certainly have preferred Maria Brindsley, yet as the other had fallen into his scheme without reluctance, he felt satisfied at the event as it occurred, precisely as a man of his easy and voluptuous character might be supposed to do. Many a time have men of his disposition and intellect been duped in a similar manner.

In the course of that evening, after tea, Miss Travers detained Betty M'Clean in order to communicate to her the charge which Miss Bennet had brought against Maria. She told her all which the reader already knows, and asked her opinion upon the circumstances as she detailed them. This was precisely the moment for which honest Betty had been lying in wait.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "a knew it would come to this; but a hev had my eye upon her when she didn't think it. Now listen, Miss Travers; instead of poor Miss Brindsley meeting Captain Doolittle, it is she herself that meets him; deil damn the word o' lie in that, bekaise a know it."

“ You know it ! no you dont ; how could you know it ? ”

Betty then recited to her the fact of Miss Bennet having purloined Doolittle's letter ; stated how she had seen her break it open, place it in her bosom, and how she had traced her to the post-office, and discovered that she had answered it—most likely, as she said, in Maria's name ; but at all events she had dogged her one night in disguise, she admitted, and saw her meet Captain Doolittle on the N——y road. Then she assured her that she had been out the night before, and let herself in by a latch-key, and you know very well that your latch-key was amissing for two or three days.

“ Well, Betty,” said Miss Travers, “ keep quiet for a day or two ; I believe every word you say, but I shall write to Dublin for a person to replace her, and the moment she comes, Miss Bennet must leave this.”

“ You need not write to Dublin for any person,” replied Betty ; “ Miss Brindsley's a better forewoman than ever she was, so that on that account you may spare yourself both the expense and the trouble. How could you

keep your accounts without her? answer me that?"

"Why, indeed, Betty, she is very valuable in that respect; but, in the meantime, as our business is increasing, I must have a fresh and clever hand from Dublin." And she wrote that very evening to Dublin for the purpose.

The next day about one o'clock, Miss Travers was sitting with her workwomen, keeping a strict eye on the conduct and bearing of the two rivals, when a loud knock came to the hall-door, and to their astonishment Doolittle and Clinton entered the apartment. If on this occasion any thing like guilt could be inferred from the deportment of either of them, unquestionably poor Maria sat for the criminal. On seeing Clinton she blushed deeply, and her hands became so tremulous that she could not work. Miss Bennet, on the contrary, was cool and undisturbed, and sufficiently collected to observe the confusion of the other, which she did with a significant glance at Miss Travers, which passed with one of scorn and vindictive triumph to Maria herself. Miss Travers, who knew not how to account for their unexpected appearance, or

rather intrusion, into such a place without permission either given or asked, rose up, and with a sharp and offended manner, said :

"Gentlemen, may I beg to know what has occasioned us the honour of this extraordinary, and, I must say, not very welcome visit?"

"It is certainly a visit," replied Clinton, "for which, Miss Travers, we ought to offer the deepest apology ; but if it may seem offensive, although it is not intended to be so, I alone am responsible for it, and ought to offer the apology, which I do sincerely, and ask your pardon."

"Oh, Mr. Clinton," she replied, "I have the pleasure of knowing who *you* are, and I believe you incapable of offering an unnecessary offence to any person, much less a female placed in my peculiar circumstances ; but, in the meantime, you have not accounted for the presence of yourself and this gentleman here."

"That's very easily done, Miss—Miss Travers is it ?" said Doolittle ; asking Clinton, parenthically, "Why the deuce don't you introduce me, Clinton ?"

"Miss Travers, Mr. Doolittle—that is, *Captain* Doolittle—a perfect hero among the ladies,

Miss Travers ; but whether he will carry his conquests farther, is yet to be known."

"Oh, the inhuman man !" exclaimed Miss Travers, with a smile in which there was a good deal of sarcasm, "is this he ; I have heard of him, and I think he is known as the *Lady-killer*."

"And I wish I could add you to the number of my victims, Miss Travers," replied Doolittle, with a grin ; "your age and experience would render such a triumph an honour."

"Gentlemen," said Miss Travers, somewhat nettled, "you have not explained your presence here."

"It is easily done, Miss Travers," replied Doolittle. "Will you have the goodness to point out a young lady named Maria Brindsley? and I beg to assure you that I have no object in this request that can be in the slightest degree offensive to her ; I only wish to make myself certain of her identity."

"That is she, sir," replied Miss Travers, pointing her out, "but I really cannot understand this," she proceeded, with something like astonishment.

"Well now," added Doolittle, "will you be so good as to point me out Miss Bennet?"

"There she is," replied Miss Travers again; "but really this is very strange, Captain Doolittle, and I beg you will explain it."

"Why—a—a—nothing but a wager," replied Doolittle, evidently much mortified at having been made a dupe of; "I thought—or rather was led to think—that this young woman," pointing to Miss Bennet, "was Maria Brindsley, but I find I was mistaken; that is all. Clinton, you have won the wager."

Clinton felt mortified in turn, especially in the presence of Maria, at the bare imputation of making such an indelicate and ungentlemanly wager.

"Never mind him, Miss Travers, nor you, Miss Brindsley; I assure you I never made, nor am I capable of making such a wager. Nothing on earth could induce me to make Miss Brindsley the subject of a wager, or of any thing that does not involve the highest respect for her on my part. *She*, at least, is incapable of making a false representation of herself, or of assuming the name and character

of another, for the unworthy purpose of injuring the reputation of that other. Your conduct is now set in its true and proper light, Miss Brindsley, and Captain Doolittle can be no longer misled by that young woman, who ungenerously and basely took your name upon her——”

“Hold ! Clinton,” said Doolittle, interrupting him ; “enough of this.”

“No, sir,” returned Clinton, whose brow was red with indignation at the risk which Maria’s character had run by Bennet’s profligacy and imposture, “I will not hold. I tell you now, Miss Travers, that she is a young woman of improper morals, and utterly unworthy to associate or live with those interesting young persons whom I see about me.”

“Good-bye, Clinton,” said his companion ; “you are a d——d goose, and so I will leave you to cackle away there as long as you like.”

“Don’t go, Captain,” said Miss Travers, “at least for a minute or two. As for Miss Bennet, I assure you, Mr. Clinton, she will not be two hours, nor one, under this roof. I had, even before your visits here, gentlemen, discovered

her treachery to that innocent and pure-minded girl, Maria Brindsley, and the diabolical attempts which she made to ruin her character. Miss Bennet, prepare your things, you must leave this house immediately ! Your iniquity and profligacy are laid bare, and you must, with as much alacrity as possible, take yourself out of this establishment. The pit which you dug for that sweet girl must now receive yourself."

"Feth, and a knowed it would come to this," observed Betty M'Clean, "and am the very girl that made the mistress acquainted with your whole conduct. I watched you well, and if it wasn't that I respect the dacent girls that's to the fore, de'il a one o' me but would expose you like a scarecrow. Aff wi' ye now, you have been too long here, but thank God, you weren't able to do the mischief against Maria Brindsley that you intended. Pack aff, then, out o' this, and fair weather be efther ye, whatever may be before ye."

Now we are bound to say, that a shade of any feeling indicative of shame at this severe exposure of her conduct, or of that agitation which one might suppose it must naturally oc-

casion, was visible even for a moment upon the very handsome face of the Dublin *belle*. Her self-possession and the intrepidity of her assurance were astonishing. Indeed, if she felt anything at all, it evidently was the most supreme contempt for every one around her. The serenity of her smile was unbroken, and, in truth, we may add, that it was worthy of a better cause. Nay, she did not even glance at Doolittle, nor seem once to notice him, but kept humming a tune in a low voice, as if to indicate her scorn of the whole company.

When Betty M'Clean had concluded, the lady rose up to leave the room, and on reaching the door, she turned round, and with a good deal of ironical grace, made them a low curtsy, but uttered not a single syllable,—and so we dismiss her from our pages.

Clinton and Doolittle now took their departure, the former having still further apologized to Miss Travers, to whom he now explained in the parlour the cause of his former visits, as well as of this, assuring her that it was his anxiety to save the reputation of Maria in the first instance, and his determination to take her out of

the false and dangerous position in which the malignant antipathy—for he could call it nothing else—of Miss Bennet had placed her, that had brought him there accompanied by Doolittle, on that occasion. She highly applauded his conduct, and assured him that Maria was worthy of all the interest which either he or any man living, no matter what his rank might be, could feel for her ; a sentiment in which Clinton expressed his hearty concurrence.

In the meantime, Doolittle, who was waiting for him outside, addressed him as follows, when he made his appearance :—

“ Clinton, I offer you every apology ; it is I that am the goose ; that d—d jade bit me fairly.”

“ Fairly !”

“ No, not fairly, she duped me egregiously, but still, she is devilish handsome, although by no means so beautiful as the other ; yet I thought I had no right to complain, but I certainly never suspected that she had assumed her name. What do you think was the cause of it ?”

“ Why, envy of her beauty, and a wish, I should suppose, to get her out of the establishment.

This principle operates strongly with women, and may be too frequently illustrated by the analogy of ambition or superior excellence among men."

"Clinton I don't wish to press you on the point, but my impression is that you love the other girl ;—I say I don't press you, but it is no harm to caution you to be on your guard, and not, in fact, to make a fool of yourself about her."

"That's a point, Doolittle, in which I require no instructions from you or any man. I trust I am able to regulate my own conduct as I ought."

"My dear fellow, do not be angry, I meant well, and in kindness."

"I am not angry, Doolittle, and I believe you *did* mean well ; but that girl is fit to be—ahem—angry ! no, so far from that, I feel perfectly delighted and happy at the result of this day's visit, simply because I have satisfied——"

"Me?"

"No, faith, but myself."

"Rather enigmatical that, but let it pass. You surely would not think of marrying her?"

“ And why not, if I took the notion ?”

“ Why, nothing, only that in that case you would have to travel towards Coventry—in other words, you should sell out.”

“ Well, and suppose I should ?”

“ Why, to be sure that’s your own affair ; but you should think of your family and connexions.”

“ Doolittle, my good friend, don’t become a Solon on our hands. When you have it from good authority that I am about to marry her, it will be time enough for you to speak. In the meantime, until then, I shall trouble you not to introduce the subject to me again, and her name not at all.”

After their return to barracks, Clinton rode out to the country, and sooth to say, it would be difficult either to detail or attempt to develop his thoughts and sensations. That he loved Maria Brindsley was now a fact which his own heart could no longer dispute ; but what was to be done ? The moral code of the mess-room was that love on the part of a British officer for a girl in her situation of life meant nothing but that mere animal passion which prompts to seduction. Here, however, -was a very different

species of affection. Here were virtue, purity, firmness, and self-respect, associated with the most brilliant and marvellous beauty, with a grace so natural—yet so delicate and fascinating—with an intellect and ease of expression which were but seldom excelled, even among the high and educated. Here, in fact, was everything calculated to fire a young and ardent imagination ; everything but birth and fortune alone ; but, although he could not elevate her birth, he could raise her to fortune. In fact, his feelings were in a perfect whirlwind ; he could scarcely think of any other object, and so completely was he absorbed in the contemplation of it, that he began to feel a disrelish for society, and a corresponding love of solitude. The great object of his immediate existence was to see her, for in fact, her image was associated with that wonderful charm of delight and ecstasy which always characterises first love, but no other, for alas, it is the Eden of youth into which the heart can never enter a second time. This active and perpetual contemplation of her, was not, however, unattended by pain amounting almost to distraction. Clinton, though warm

and enthusiastic, was yet possessed of strong sense. In developing, for instance, the tendencies of his own heart, he could not help asking himself what must be the practical and ultimate result ; could he marry her without dishonouring his family and connexions ? Could he introduce her to the society in which he himself and all his relatives had for generations moved ; and even if he should make the experiment, what would be her reception ? She had fine sense, and very lady-like manners—but then she was unacquainted with those accomplishments and acquired habits, without which no woman, however naturally graceful or elegant, can acquit herself in the circles of high-bred and polished life. The conflict, in fact, between love and the spirit of the world was so severe and desperate, that it began to affect his health, and the usual buoyancy of his spirits was succeeded by such depression and melancholy, as kept him almost isolated from society. His brother-officers suspected the cause of this dejection, but as they highly respected him, and knew besides that he was not a person to be tampered with, they never alluded to Maria in his presence.

She, in the meantime, was not without her own trials and struggles in connexion with the state of her heart and affections. The warm and manly interest which Clinton had taken in her happiness by the exposure of her deadly enemy, Miss Bennet, and the candid avowal he had made of the respect which he entertained for her, sank deeply into a heart already too decidedly biased in his favour. She felt that she loved him with a most devoted and disinterested attachment ; but she felt besides, that that attachment, pure and generous though it was, must never be avowed, and that by the peculiar calamity of her fate, it must accompany her in secret to the grave, there to rest for ever.

Such was the condition of those two lovers, when Clinton, after the expiration of a fortnight, found that he had argued away—at least with sufficient satisfaction to his own heart—every objection which the cooler dictates of reason and prudence had suggested. He could not lead the wretched life he was passing ; he could not think of tearing himself away from her ; he could scarcely rest either by night or day ; he had become nervous, and was visited

by such lengthened fits of gloom as began to fill him with alarm. At length, he resolved to seek an interview, and to declare fully and at once that he neither could nor would live without her. This, however, he found a matter of insurmountable difficulty. Deeply as she was attached to him, she resolved never again to put herself into his power, or within his influence, and to this resolution she firmly adhered. Every attempt to see her was consequently unsuccessful ; every letter was returned unopened, and in a very brief space, the unfortunate young man became so outrageous, that he resolved to force his way into Miss Travers's house, and see her by violence. This resolution was conveyed in a note to Miss Travers herself, who, at the suggestion of Maria, had an interview with the Rev. Dr. Spillar, to whom she produced it, requesting, at the same time, that he would recollect the promise of protection which he had made to the alarmed girl. The reverend gentleman promised to do so, and in accordance with that promise, waited upon Clinton, who being ignorant of his business, and wrapped up in a gloomy misanthropy, would scarcely consent to see him. At

length he admitted him, and the following characteristic dialogue took place between them :

" Pray, Mr. Clinton, will you allow me to ask you, are you in your sober senses ?"

" And from the nature of the question, doctor, will you allow *me* to ask if you are in yours ?"

" I have the first claim for a reply," returned the venerable historian of A——h.

" Well, then, sir, it is my opinion that very few persons are so. I agree with Domasippus in Horace, that most men are actually mad."

" But I refer to your own case," said the other.

" Well, then, I dare say you may reckon me in the category of insanity, for if not mad, I am very near it."

" That is a paradox," replied the doctor, " for although certainly mad, you utter the language of a sane man now. Are you the author of that letter ?"

Clinton looked at his letter to Miss Travers, and certainly blushed at its extravagance. " I am, sir," he replied, " I will not deny it, but I have been treated not only with harshness, but contempt."

"You are in love, I presume?"

"I am in love, I will not deny that either."

"With an humble girl?"

"No; not with an humble girl. I am not humble either in rank or birth myself; yet she is infinitely above me."

"Is she so in birth and position?"

"This is the cant of the world, doctor, and I will not hear it. It is the empty and contemptible jargon of the aristocracy, who look to little but what is external to true worth. The aristocracy of nature virtue, and honour, constitutes a rank far more elevated than that of either wealth or title, when it possesses them not. This girl is every way my superior, and if I had the coronet of a marquis, she would honour it. I have reflected deeply upon this subject, sir; I have balanced every contingency; have calculated all the consequences, and as I am an independent man, I have no notion of sacrificing my own happiness to the prejudices of the world. Let the world entertain its own prejudices, I shall entertain mine."

"My dear young friend, this is not love, but the insanity of love. Every passion carried to

an unreasonable excess becomes insanity,—a *monomania* in fact,—and under that you unfortunately labour at the present time. Think of your family and connexions ; would you disgrace them by such an ill-assorted union as this ? for I will take it for granted that you have no dishonourable designs upon this girl.”

“ If I have, you may also take it for granted that I am an unprincipled villain. No sir, my affection for her is too pure and elevated to suffer contamination from such a thought.”

“ Well, but after all, you know not what you do ; you are intoxicated—you are incapable of thinking or acting like a reasonable being. You say you love her ; I doubt that ; true love looks to the happiness of its object. Would her union with you make *her* happy ? think of its consequences to herself ; she will be put out of the pale of respectable society ; she will not be received in it ; how will this act upon you and upon *her* ? she cannot change the opinions of the world, whether they may happen to be right or wrong. The world is too strong an antagonist for any individual, and it unfortunately crushes

every one, whether man or woman, who ventures to encounter it."

"Well, but there is no necessity for encountering it ; we can retire from it, and live independently of it. I have, thank God, ample means to do so."

"After all, Mr. Clinton, perhaps you reckon without your host,—are you certain the girl loves you?"

"I must be candid with you—I *think* she does, but she certainly never told me so."

"Well, I will say that if she is the high-minded girl that you represent her to be, she will not marry you ; but above all things, if she loves you with a true and honourable affection, she will never suffer you to sacrifice yourself on her account, nor will she afford you an opportunity of doing so."

This last observation startled Clinton, because, in fact, it was precisely what he apprehended. Neither could he forget that she herself had told him so, on the night of the outrage.

"In order to ascertain that," he replied, "it would be necessary that I should have at least one interview with her."

“ This, my dear young friend, is perfect madness ; that the object of your love is an admirable girl I believe, and that she is certainly one of the loveliest of God’s creatures I know, for I have seen her frequently in church,—and besides, she has herself called on me to request that I would protect her from you,—*from you!*—mark that. I now come to request that you will not in future either harass or annoy her. It is clear that she rejects your proposals, and will neither receive your letters or your visits. Now, would any man of spirit persist, after such marked and decided opposition on her part ?”

“ Sir, if there be truth in man, or in the eyes of woman, I say that the girl, whatever be the motive of her present conduct, does love me. If not, then——”

“ What’s that ? The eyes of woman ! àlas, poor young man, is it come to that with you. Did you never hear of such a thing as a coquette, or a flirt, who use their eyes only for the very purpose of alluring and deceiving. You are a poor youth in a drowning state, and would I see, fain catch at the straw before you sink—The eye of woman ! listen, however, and if you will follow

my advice, you may yet extricate yourself out of the toils which the beauty of this girl has spread about you ; undertake a course of history—it is a calm sedate study, and will develop reflection, coolness and judgment, but above all history, read my celebrated history of A——h. That is my last and most serious advice to you.”

“But, my dear doctor,” replied Clinton, anxious to have a hit at him for the obvious want of sympathy which his whole conversation and conduct indicated, “I assure you, my dear doctor, that I don’t require your book ; I can sleep perfectly well without it.”

“Oh, then in that case you must not imagine yourself in love,” replied the doctor. “And now before you go, pledge yourself that you will not annoy this girl. She has placed herself under my protection as a clergyman, and I have promised that she shall not do so in vain. All I can say then is, that if you persist in harassing her, I must consider your conduct unworthy of your rank as a gentleman, annoying and insulting to her, and deeply offensive to myself.”

“Do not be mistaken, doctor. I entertain every

respect for both you and her, but I declare before heaven, that I will neither rest myself, nor allow her to rest, until I hear my fate finally pronounced by her own lips. On this I am resolved, and I shall keep the resolution, let the consequences be what they may. I cannot bear this state of suspense, and I will not—I would prefer death itself to the life I lead, and the agony I suffer.”

“Heaven knows,” replied the kind-hearted doctor, now considerably moved by what he saw the unhappy young man enduring, “I feel more deeply for you than you imagine; but as you appear to be so perfectly uncontrollable, will you promise me to take no step with reference to this girl, until you either see or hear from me again.”

“Unquestionably I promise it, but upon the sole condition that you will not keep me long in this state of cruel and depressing uncertainty,—Alas! my dear sir, if you knew what I suffer, you would feel deeply for me. I am honourable, and it is in the spirit of honour that I wish to act.”

As he uttered these words his feelings com-

pletely overcame him, and his fine manly eyes filled with tears.

The old clergyman pressed his hand, and assured him he would soon either hear from or see him again.

“This,” said he to himself as he went along, “is a case which cannot be overlooked, or left to its own operations. I have never read or heard out of worthless works of fiction of such a desperate position as this young man is in. It is certainly better, I think, that he should see her and hear his doom, and whether it may be for his good or his evil, heaven only knows, but I really fear that he is incapable of bearing this state of suspense much longer without some consequent injury either to his health, or intellect, if not to both.”

He accordingly turned his steps towards the residence of Miss Travers, with whom he had a long conversation, and to whom, under the most solemn seal and promise of secrecy, he communicated Clinton's anxiety to see Maria, who, he thought, might without impropriety favour him with at least one interview. The old maid felt flattered by the confidence now reposed in her,

and as she hoped that the interview alluded to night possibly close all further communication between them, she immediately assented to it. A difficulty, however, yet remained, which she thought they had better ascertain at once. Would Maria consent to see Clinton? This was a problem which could not be solved without herself, and Miss Travers proposed that they should send upstairs and request her attendance.

"Your presence here, sir," said she, "and your sanction to such a meeting, may induce her to give it when every other argument might fail."

She was accordingly sent for, and in a few minutes entered the room with a cheek—especially on unexpectedly finding Dr. Spillar there—occasionally red and pale by turns.

"Maria, my dear," said Miss Travers, "here is Dr. Spillar, who wishes to make a proposal to you."

Now Maria was not without a strong sense of humour, and the notion that the good old historian had unluckily been smitten by her beauty filled her with such an impression of the

ridiculous, that she could not forbear smiling; and was very near laughing outright. Having composed herself a little, however, she ventured to ask,

“Pray, what may be the nature of the proposal, Miss Travers?”

“Dr. Spillar himself will tell you Maria; he will explain it much better than I.”

Maria began to feel uneasy, and looked with a kind of apprehensive enquiry at the old gentleman.

“My dear,” said the doctor, ahem—“it is the old song and the old subject—love.”

“But I did not suppose, sir, that you could feel such a thing as love at your years.”

The doctor, however, at once saw the error into which she had been led, and hastened to set her right.

“My dear child,” said he, “surely you cannot suppose that the proposal comes from myself?”

“And pray, sir, from whom does it come?” she asked.

“From an unhappy gentleman whom your beauty has captivated, and of whom you know something—from Lieutenant Clinton.”

The tell-tale blushes were again at work. At length she replied—"Will you have the goodness, sir, to explain yourself more fully?"

"I will not dwell upon his state of mind," he proceeded, "his proffers are honourable—proffers of legitimate marriage—but pray, observe that *I* do not identify myself with any such proffers, neither do I countenance them; with such offers I have nothing to do."

"But do you believe him serious in them, sir?"

"Most assuredly I do; but the object of my visit here now is to recommend you to afford him one interview, in order that he may hear his fate from your own lips. Anything, even the taking away of all hope, is better and more endurable than the suspense he suffers. It may save yourself from much future trouble and annoyance; for as certain as he has life, he will keep such a siege to this house as may not be creditable to its reputation, at least in the eyes of the ignorant, who may misinterpret his visits to it, unless you consent at least to one interview."

"Well, sir," she replied, "under your advice and with your sanction, I will give him one in-

terview ; but pray, mark me, had you deemed his offers of marriage *not* serious, I would not have seen him at all ; but now that you assure me they *are* so, I will.

CHAPTER XI. .

THE DOCTOR A GO-BETWEEN—A LOVE SCENE ANYTHING BUT
AGREEABLE TO ONE OF THE PARTIES—A DOUBTFUL PROJECT
IN WHICH THE DOCTOR ENGAGES.

THE historian on his way home felt himself sadly puzzled. The good old man was very sensible in many things, yet exceedingly simple in others. In his interview with Clinton, he had taken a rather unusual and elevated view in speculating on Maria's conduct in the affair, but it was rather what he conceived a mere argumentative paradox resorted to for the purpose of bringing his opponent to reason than from any belief he entertained that an humble girl like her should possess either the virtue or the high sense of independence, to act with a dignity that he knew would have done honour to Greece or Rome. Now, however, when he had seen and marked the artful distinction which she drew when the subject of his love became the topic of conversation, he bitterly

regretted that he had entered into the matter at all.

“She said,” he proceeded to himself, “that if she thought his proposals were not sincere, she would refuse to see him ; but that if she thought they were honourable, she would. This places me in a bad position, especially if they should get married, but in a worse one still, if they should elope. The world will call me nothing more nor less than a villanous old go-between, and the consequence will be that more scandal will fall upon my head than upon theirs. As it is, I will make her a present of my celebrated history of A——h, which may in some degree withdraw her mind from love affairs. I will call this evening and leave it with her, and if the perusal of it succeeds in extinguishing this flame, or preventing such an unsuitable match, I shall certainly rejoice, and it may save us all from much scandal.”

This, for the present, was his only consolation, and with respect to Maria, he certainly kept his word. On that evening he called to the house, and having placed his celebrated history in the hands of Miss Travers, he earnestly requested

that she would give it to Maria, with his best wishes for her welfare, and a sincere hope that she would read and study it with attention.

On the second day after this, Clinton, who had been suffering tortures, received from the worthy man the following communication, marked *strictly private and confidential*.

“DEAR SIR,—I fear I cut anything but a creditable figure as an agent in the management of your love difficulties. Heaven knows, it ill becomes a man of my years and calling, to catch himself so actively employed in such a questionable task. How can I tell what may happen, and I will engage if anything wrong *does* happen, that both you and she, in order to exculpate yourselves, will not scruple to lay the blame of it upon my shoulders, and the world, of course, will follow your example, and say that nothing improper would have occurred had I not brought you together. God knows I did it with the best intention ; but don't misunderstand me, for by this I mean that my object was to put an end to your foolish passion if I could, by bringing about an interview in

order that you might finally learn the hopelessness of your fate from her own lips, and I beg that you will not misunderstand me here again, —by her own lips I mean her own ultimate and unalterable determination to decline your addresses. Unfortunately I have my doubts of this now, and I think better to inform you of the fact, that you may reflect upon your folly in time, and at all events, exhibit such a generous forbearance in your interview with her on the point of consent, as will redound to your own credit. I had myself an interview with her after I left you the day before yesterday. Miss Travers sent for her, and in a few minutes she entered the room. From the manner in which that respectable person opened the conversation, the beautiful creature was led at first to suppose that I was about to make a matrimonial proposal to her myself, and the poor thing looked very much pleased. I hastened, however, to undeceive her, lest the blundering old maid might lead her into a fool's paradise, by the notion of such a thing. I studied her very closely after she had entered the room, which she did with a good deal of confusion, poor child, for I believe

she had been told that *I* was expecting her. After she spoke she blushed, and I could not help thinking of the celebrated lines in Virgil :

“Dixit ; et avertens rosea cervice refulsit,
Ambrosiæque comæ divinum vertice odorem
Spiravere ; pedes vestis defluxit ad imos ;
Et vera incessu patuit dea ”

“ After some brief conversation, she told me that if she thought your proposals were *not* honourable, she would at once decline receiving you ; but that if she believed they were, she would consent to an interview—a distinction which I don’t admire, and which leads me to apprehend that she is a mere syren, and wishes to lure you into her meshes. I give you this information beforehand, in order that you may be on your guard. I have taken pains, however, to check the ardour of her affection for you, that is, provided always that she entertains any, by bringing to her my own celebrated history of A——h. It is one thing, observe, for an humble girl to marry a man of rank and wealth, and another thing to love him. I have now prepared you for this interview, or rather guarded you against its consequences. If you

would read history more, you would feel this foolish passion less, as the one would cool down and sober the other, which must produce an admirable effect upon you both. In the meantime, God prosper you,

“My poor unhappy young man, and believe
“me to be your sincere friend,

“GEORGE SPILLAR, D.D.

“P.S.—Pray let me know the result of the interview.

“P.P.S.—It was about dusk when I brought her my ‘History,’ and on my way home, two young fellows in the garb certainly of gentlemen, came close to me, and said in a low voice,

““So, doctor, you too were striving to get a peep at the celebrated beauty ; well done, my old historian !”

Clinton, who knew a good deal of the worthy man’s character, was not only amused but delighted with this epistle. One great object was gained—her consent to see him. He consequently sent a note to Miss Travers, asking to know when he might present himself, and stat-

ing that he was deeply indebted, and would feel for ever grateful to Miss Brindsley for her goodness and condescension in vouchsafing to see him. He would not, he assured them both, abuse the privilege nor encroach upon Miss Brindsley's time, but would submit himself in all things to her wishes. As Maria felt anxious that the interview should be over as soon as possible, she appointed the next day for their meeting, and having done so, she experienced a combined feeling of depression and relief, and that from reasons which will almost immediately appear. Strange, indeed, was the fate of these two young lovers ; but be that fate what it may, we cannot now, without anticipating its events, advance in our narrative except by those gradual steps which led them both onwards to their ultimate destiny.

At length the eventful day arrived, and Clinton, with a beating heart, found himself in the now well-known parlour of Miss Travers.

When Maria heard that he awaited her below, a sickness almost like that of death came over her ; she felt that this was indeed the melancholy crisis of her destiny, and that she herself,

♦

for the sake of her generous lover, was about to determine it for ever at the terrible cost of her own happiness. The sacrifice, however, was to be made, and she resolved to make it. At this moment the recollection of the sealed prophecy recurred to her, and as she had it at that very time in her own possession, she was strongly tempted to open it, and, if possible, be guided by its purport. But again, the awful admonition and countermand fell deeply and with something like terror on her heart ; she summoned her courage and self-denial, and with a firm resolution to await the event which might justify her in opening it—if ever that event should arrive—she rallied a little ; and having composed herself as well as she could, she descended, with fear and trembling, to the parlour.

Clinton, to whom she taught a lesson of forbearance and moderation in his conduct and sentiments, received her with peculiar deference and respect. This, however, was the natural temper of his mind and character, for Clinton, as the reader knows, was a gentleman and a man of feeling. She was now entitled to his respect.

All his suspicions of her had been removed—flung to the winds, and she had been proved to be not only what he had originally thought her, but something still purer and more exalted. Their relative position with respect to each other was now very different from what it had been on that night of violence, when he looked upon her with such doubt and suspicion as almost—he thought—amounted to the most excruciating certainty. On her entering the room, he at once arose and handed her a chair ; he looked at her closely too, and at once saw that the state of trepidation in which she appeared before him, entitled her to every courtesy and kindness of manner which he could assume ; but, indeed, on this occasion they were only the spontaneous effusion of his heart.

“ Miss Brindsley,” said he, “ you know not the obligations under which you place me by at last consenting to afford me an interview, because you know not what I have suffered from the despair of obtaining it.”

“ But I thought, sir,” she replied, “ that from the sentiments I expressed to you upon *that* night, that you would not feel justified in seek-

ing another interview ; I think I expressed myself very plainly."

" Yes," he replied ; " but the circumstances between us are changed. They are not now what I believed, or at least suspected them to be on that night."

" So far as I am concerned, Mr. Clinton, they are not changed. I am the same girl now that I was on that night, and hold to the same resolution now which I expressed then."

" But you must understand that *I* am changed, and that I come before you on different principles and with different claims. You know how your conduct in my opinion was then involved in doubt and mystery—doubts and mysteries which almost drove me mad. But now those doubts and mysteries through which, even then, my love for you bubbled up with fervour and vehemence from my heart, are all removed for ever, and you appear before me the pure and uncontaminated creature which I first thought you, or rather knew you, to be."

" I am certainly glad, sir," she replied, " that my character and conduct have been set right in your opinion ; for since you happen to feel

an interest in me, it would have been painful to me—very painful indeed—to have lain under your suspicions. I say I feel glad, then, that I am restored to your good opinion ; but still, Mr. Clinton, that does not, nor cannot, change our position.”

“Oh, but most assuredly it does, and can, and shall. I now ask your love in an honourable sense ; you are the first woman I ever loved, and——”

“The *first* !” she replied, with a vivacity which struck him forcibly.

“Yes,” he returned, “*the first*, and *the only one*.”

A deep blush suffused her cheek, and an expression, not only of melancholy, but profound sorrow, settled unconsciously on her countenance.

“This interview,” she said “is a very painful one to me, Mr. Clinton ; I almost regret it has taken place. Indeed I wish it had not ; it would have saved us both much—much”——here she paused a moment——“however,” she added, “as Dr. Spillar thought it better that I should give you one *last* meeting, and as I had

placed myself under his guardianship, I yielded to his wishes."

"You don't say a last meeting, Maria—for I will call you so—you don't say *our last*? Consider that I now offer you my fortune, my hand, my heart—offer them to you that you may become my wife in the eye of God and of the world. Can man do more to obtain a woman's love? Surely, Maria, you can feel no doubt as to the sincerity of my passion after such a declaration as this."

During this dialogue Maria kept her eyes down, nor did she once raise them to meet his since she entered the room.

"Why," he proceeded, after a short pause, "why do you not reply to me? but, above all, why do you not bestow upon me one single glance? Alas! Maria, it was not so when we used to meet in C——r cathedral."

She involuntarily raised her eyes and glanced at him, and he could see that there were in their expression both deprecation and deep sorrow.

"I wish," she replied, "that we never had met there."

Clinton was much moved, for he saw that she was suffering, but from what cause he could not conjecture with any certainty.

“ You seem, Maria,” he proceeded, “ to be in sorrow ; but why do you not reply to me ?”

“ I believe,” she replied, “ that your affection for me is sincere ; indeed I know it is, because you have given me such proofs of it as I cannot doubt. If I could or did doubt it, I would feel less pain than I must feel in the reply I am about to give you.”

Clinton’s heart sank at those words, for he could scarcely help feeling that they foreboded the ruin of his hopes.

“ What are you about to say ?” he asked ; “ beware how you tamper with or make a wreck of my happiness. You are everything to me—the hope and solace of my being, the sunshine of my future existence here, the branch by which I hang upon the precipice of life ; do not break from my hold and precipitate me to darkness and destruction.”

“ You look too gloomily upon that part of the subject,” she replied, summoning all her extraordinary fortitude to her aid ; “ you do not

wish, surely, that my union with you should become a shadow over your life, a blight upon your happiness, a chill upon the natural warmth of your enjoyment. You look only on one side of the question, but I look upon both. You know you are yet but a young man, and cannot boast of much experience in the world ; and I tell you, that if I yielded to your offers—generous and honourable as they are—I tell you, I say, that it is not impossible that the time might come when you would curse the day that ever I consented to become your wife.”

“ By heavens ! it is impossible. I know my own heart, and I know the world better than you think ; and when I put it in competition with my happiness with you, I despise it. I have thought of this, and made all those calculations often and often. Besides, thank God, I am independent of the world, and will continue so.”

“ What ! could you be so unmanly as to give up your place in it ; to renounce an honourable ambition, and that distinction which you have both talents and spirit to achieve, and all for a lowly-born girl, for whom, in the fervour of

youth, you have conceived an affection which, from its very violence, is likely to soon burn out and prove anything but a lasting one. Now, hear me with patience. If I consented to marry you, what must be the consequence to us both, but especially to you ? Could you introduce me to the society in which you live and move ? could you take me by the hand and introduce me to the members of your own family ? could you introduce me to the haughty wives of your brother officers ? could you bear, without pain, to see your wife rejected, sneered at, spurned, and insulted, and all because she is lowly-born. You know, Mr. Clinton, that this is the world, and what must happen if I were so much your enemy as to become your wife."

"Let me see," said he, starting up, and putting his hand upon his sword—for he had come purposely in full uniform—"let me see the living man who shall dare to insult you, nay, to hint, breathe, or look an insult, and I shall teach him a lesson he will never forget."

"Perhaps the men might not," she continued, "but what guard have you or can you have

over the women, whose province and privilege they consider it to heap insult and wreak their pride of birth and place on any unhappy female of humble parentage who may happen, by some accidental turn of good fortune, to be raised to their own level. Good fortune ! alas ! it is in general anything but good fortune to her ; she is looked upon as an upstart and an intruder, and is treated with nothing but contempt, and ridicule, and scorn."

"Alas ! Maria, why not say at once that you do not love me ?"

"Ah," she replied, "I fear you do not know me, as, indeed, how could you, since you have had so little opportunity of understanding my character. If you knew me better you would perceive at once why I speak upon this subject as I do. You would raise me up to a position in life which I have neither education nor accomplishments to fill ; but if you raised me up, then, you know, I should drag you down ; but that I never will do. How could I entail degradation and shame, and the censure and ridicule of the world, on the man I love ; on the man who would raise me to a high place, where

I could become only a clearer mark for the shafts of calumny and scandal. But there is another argument against my union with you, which is as strong as any I have advanced. You forget that I am the protégée of your mother ; that she placed me here with her kindest and strongest recommendations, and committed me to the care of Miss Travers as a young woman of firm and honest principles, in whom she took a warm and friendly interest. Can you not imagine, then, how she must look upon my conduct if I should consent to yield to the temporary attachment of that son whom she loves so tenderly, and from whose future position and figure in life, as the representative of his old and distinguished family, she expects so much ? Think of her sorrow, think of her agony, think of her despair, on finding that the bright and honourable career which she expected you to pursue and accomplish, should be destroyed by your marriage with me. And if you will not think of this, then think of the position which *I* should hold in her estimation. What opinion must she not form of my ingratitude ? Is this the return, she will say, which that artful and

ungrateful girl has made me for my kindness to her ? to seduce the affections of my youthful son, to insinuate herself into his heart, and to manage his inexperience for her own base and selfish purposes. Would she not say that my object was to smuggle myself, through your weakness, and folly, and inexperience, into a respectable family, which my connection with it would only bring to disgrace, and shame, and affliction."

Clinton was stunned by the irresistible force and truth of these arguments, and could not utter a word, but his eyes were fixed upon her, and notwithstanding that she was cutting down every hope from under him, he felt entranced. There glowed in her divine features such an expression of sorrowful, but heroic enthusiasm, as he had never witnessed or even conceived, especially when playing over such transcendent beauty.

" Maria," said he, " I can only repeat what I have just said : I feel that you do not love me. The happy dream of my life is vanishing, and existence is likely to become nothing to me but darkness and a blank. All its aims and pur-

poses which I had projected with you by my side, will soon disappear ; but, indeed, I thought you had loved me."

As he spoke he was deeply moved, and the expression of manly sorrow which she read in his face, was irresistibly affecting.

She rose up in a state of the deepest emotion, and replied : "Then you do not understand me," she said, "or must I, as the last painful and melancholy argument in my own defence, disclose that which I have concealed so long ? Do you know what the love of woman, in its highest and purest sense, is—to promote the good of its object, and avert evil from it, even at its own expense, and the life-long sacrifice of its happiness. That is the sacrifice which I make for you ; but notwithstanding the love that prompts that sacrifice, I will never consent to become the author of your ruin, or draw down disgrace upon you and your family. Think not of it ; do not for a moment expect that I shall change ; but when you are, as you will be, far removed from me, think sometimes of the love which Maria Brindsley bore you when the world knew it not. Good bye !" she

said, extending her hand, "for I will see you no more."

He seized her hand, but he could not utter a word ; his tears fell upon her face, whilst her own flowed fast ; he kissed her lips more than once, but she immediately extricated herself from his arms, waved him one mute farewell with her hand, and disappeared.

Miss Travers, who had been watching her that she might hear the result of the interview, immediately followed her to her own room, when Maria, on seeing her, threw herself into her arms, and wept long and bitterly.

"Good God !" exclaimed the former, "what has happened, Maria, and why are you in such a dreadful state ?"

"It is all over now," she replied, "and I see him no more. I am resolved to leave you, Miss Travers, and go home to-morrow morning."

"But what *has* happened ?" again asked the other, now also in tears, for it was impossible to look on the sorrow of such a creature without sympathy.

"I have finally and for ever rejected him—and, as I said, all is over between us. I love

him too well to ruin him. And now, Miss Travers, I must prepare this evening for my journey home to-morrow. You know I must start early by the public car. Will you be good enough to leave me for a time. I would wish to be alone, and think of what I am to do for the future."

"Well," exclaimed poor Miss Travers, wiping her eyes, and then clasping her hands with looks of amazement, "if that is love, it is surely the most extraordinary kind of it I ever heard of. To reject the man you love, and he wealthy, of a high family, rich, young, and handsome—surpasses anything I ever dreamt of. Why, after all, I think you must have but a hard heart, Maria. Ah! that is not the answer I would have given to my poor Thady if he had—I mean, that is not the answer I *did* give him when he proposed for me. To love such a man and not marry him—shade of my darling Thady! what am I to think of it?"

Poor Clinton was overwhelmed, prostrated, distracted. The force of Maria's noble and self-denying enthusiasm had so completely borne him away with it, that he felt himself as if in

some terrible dream—without presence of mind or steadiness of purpose to combat her arguments as he had intended. He became paralysed as with a severe and unexpected shock, and went home in such a state of delirious agitation that he knew not how he got there. He was now perfectly helpless, and for a time could neither think nor act for himself. He knew that some dreadful calamity had occurred, but occasionally forgot what it was. He went to ride, as was usual with him when agitated, and rode far and furiously—but ride at what speed he might, he could not leave the fiery gloom in which he was wrapped, nor the sense of his terrible desolation behind him. On his return to dress for dinner he changed his mind, and sent an apology to the mess, stating that he was too unwell to join them, which, indeed, was the truth. The next day he was unable to rise, and during the following fortnight suffered all the delirious agonies of a severe and dangerous brain-fever, from which he recovered with great difficulty. Maria's name was frequently, almost perpetually, on his lips, but as none of those who attended him knew who "Maria" was, no

association could be traced between her and him. Not so with his brother officers, who, through the blabbing of Doolittle, strongly suspected not only who she was, but that she had occasioned his illness.

In the meantime, Maria, on the evening before her departure from home, thought herself bound in gratitude to call upon Dr. Spillar, in the first place, to thank him for the kind interest he had taken in her troubles ; and in the second, to return him his celebrated history of A——h, which learned work—and it is both an able and a learned work—he would by no means receive back, but presented it to her as a mark of his respect for her character and conduct under difficulties, which she bore with such heroism and firmness. It was about dusk, and the good-hearted doctor would not allow her to go home without his own escort, and he accordingly left her safely at Miss Travers's house. In a country town there is scarcely a single motion of a prominent character that is not marked, and very probably misconstrued. It was not so, however, in this case, for the doctor's age, profession, and character placed him above scandal. But there is

a class of idle wags who take an unjustifiable pleasure in having and circulating their idle jests at the expense of grave and religious persons. Accordingly, as he was returning to his own house, he was accosted in the following words—“Good again, doctor! you will carry away the beauty at last. History and divinity against all opposition.” The good old man only smiled, and gave himself no further concern about what he knew was only a jest.

One morning about three weeks after Maria's departure, Clinton, who was now tolerably recovered, although still looking a little pale, called on him, and in a tone of singular firmness and resolution, addressed him as follows :

“Doctor, I am come to you as to a friend who, I trust, can sympathise with and understand me. You know my attachment for that girl—attachment is a weak word, but let it pass—you know it; but you don't know the character of that girl herself.”

“Better, perhaps, than you may imagine,” replied the doctor.

“You are aware that she has left A——h.”

“I am perfectly; the dear girl called on me

the evening before she went ; but I assure you, only for the purpose of thanking me, and returning my own history, which I had given her with the best intentions."

"Did she call upon you?"

"She did ; I saw her safely home—but you look surprised !"

"Who, I ? Not a whit."

"Because I know that passionate and hasty young fellows like you have their suspicions and jealousies easily excited. I pledge my word, I never thought of the girl except as a father and a Christian friend, whose age and character certainly give me a claim to protect her from the snares of the world. I say this now, because I think your very angry letter to me upon the subject was unreasonable and uncalled for. You must have written it whilst in a hallucination or a state of delirium."

"Me ! a letter ! In God's name, what do you mean, my dear Doctor ? Explain yourself. *I* never wrote you a letter."

"Perhaps, as you were not perfectly recovered from your illness, you may forget it ; but here," he added, opening his desk, "here it is."

Clinton took the letter with astonishment, and read as follows :

“ REVEREND SIR—You are crossing my path, like an old historical demon as you are. You’ve got yourself over head and ears in love with M. B——, and are in the habit of sending her cakes and sugarcandy, and other dangerous compositions, such as ‘ Ovid’s Art of Love,’ and ‘ The Kisses of Johannes Secundus,’ until, I believe in my soul, you have succeeded in weaning her affections from me. Now, I beg you to give up this pursuit, which is the more reprehensible in a man of your character, as it is well-known that you have not the most remote intention of marrying her. She has been at your house and you have been at hers, and you have almost made a historian of her already—and I well know what kind of morals a female historian must possess. Do not, therefore, cross my path, or beware the consequences.

“ ARTHUR CLINTON.”

Clinton, who might have enjoyed this jest upon the pious and amiable doctor under other

circumstances, was in no frame of mind to bestow it even a thought. He accordingly threw it aside, and said :

“ Pay no attention to it, sir ; it is a poor, silly jest which some one has been playing off upon you. As for me, I have more serious matters to think of just at present. You are aware, I suppose, that this impracticable but great-minded girl has taken refuge with her mother ?”

“ I am aware of everything,” responded the doctor ; “ she herself has told me all. In my conversation with you, the first day I called on you with reference to her, you may remember that I said, ‘ if she loved you truly, she would most probably decline any matrimonial proposal you might make her.’ In saying this, however, I had only formed an *ideal* character as a part of my argument, which I did not imagine any girl in her circumstances of life could have verified. She has, however, transcended and surpassed it ; and I am at a loss what to say.”

“ So am not I,” replied Clinton ; “ you know she is a perfect lady as it is—a miracle of natural intellect and elegance—but still she is de-

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circumstances, was in no frame of mind to bestow it even a thought. He accordingly threw it aside, and said :

“ Pay no attention to it, sir ; it is a poor, silly jest which some one has been playing off upon you. As for me, I have more serious matters to think of just at present. You are aware, I suppose, that this impracticable but great-minded girl has taken refuge with her mother ?”

“ I am aware of everything,” responded the doctor ; “ she herself has told me all. In my conversation with you, the first day I called on you with reference to her, you may remember that I said, ‘ if she loved you truly, she would most probably decline any matrimonial proposal you might make her.’ In saying this, however, I had only formed an *ideal* character as a part of my argument, which I did not imagine any girl in her circumstances of life could have verified. She has, however, transcended and surpassed it ; and I am at a loss what to say.”

“ So am not I,” replied Clinton ; “ you know she is a perfect lady as it is—a miracle of natural intellect and elegance—but still she is de-

Clinton took the letter with astonishment, and read as follows :

“ REVEREND SIR—You are crossing my path, like an old historical demon as you are. You’ve got yourself over head and ears in love with M. B——, and are in the habit of sending her cakes and sugarcandy, and other dangerous compositions, such as ‘ Ovid’s Art of Love,’ and ‘ The Kisses of Johannes Secundus,’ until, I believe in my soul, you have succeeded in weaning her affections from me. Now, I beg you to give up this pursuit, which is the more reprehensible in a man of your character, as it is well-known that you have not the most remote intention of marrying her. She has been at your house and you have been at hers, and you have almost made a historian of her already—and I well know what kind of morals a female historian must possess. Do not, therefore, cross my path, or beware the consequences.

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“ So am not I,” replied Clinton ; “ you know she is a perfect lady as it is—a miracle of natural intellect and elegance—but still she is de-

ficient in education and those accomplishments which are necessary to the habits and usages of well-bred society. Now, sir, pay attention to me—it is my fixed determination to bestow those upon her. It can be easily done. I shall send her to the best boarding-school that can be found in London ; let her remain there for three years, within which time, I have no doubt that her education will be complete. In good sense and natural talent she wants little. The elegance of her language and her graceful facility of expression, are amazing, when we consider her opportunities. This, then, is my purpose, from which no earthly interest, whilst I possess life and means, shall divert me. She is, at any time, a fit companion for myself—or rather, every way my superior. I shall, however, make her not only worthy of society, but a grace and an ornament to it. Now, this is my purpose ; and in order to accomplish this purpose, I say that you, my dear and kind friend, will and must assist me. The admirable girl loves me—but with a love so noble and disinterested, that feeling, as she does, her incompetence to do justice to my choice when in-

roduced into fashionable life, she declines my offers, upon the argument that my union with a lovely and uneducated girl would degrade and ruin me, and also from a sense of gratitude to my mother. I am glad she reasoned with me as she did, for I must confess, that were it not for what she urged against her marriage with me at our last interview, I would never have thought of this project."

"Well, my young friend," said the doctor, smiling, "I had made up my mind to get out of this business, but I find you wish *to make me useful* again. Pray, what do you ask me to do on this occasion?"

"Why, to see herself and her mother, to mention this project to them, and to urge it on them with all the influence of your character. Yes, my dear doctor, and you must do more : for if she and her mother consent, you will be good enough to conduct her to London, and settle her in such an establishment as you may deem proper. You are a clergyman of fame and eminence, and you will experience little difficulty in making a proper selection. If you refuse to do this, I shall sell out and leave Europe, and

will take very little heed of what may become of me. You are not rich, and I need not say that all necessary funds shall be liberally supplied to you."

"I will not give you an answer now," replied the Doctor, "because I shall require time to consider this strange proposal ; but if you will call on me to-morrow about this hour, I will know what reply to give you."

"I trust it will be favourable," replied Clinton. "Consider that it will be necessary for some person of consideration and character to place a girl without ostensible connections in such an establishment. Your interest in her will be a sufficient guarantee for her position and respectability. All the rest I will leave to her own good sense and prudence."

"Well, then, to-morrow, about this hour, and we will talk of it again."

Maria's return home was not altogether unexpected by her mother. She had, for some time past, been anticipating the necessity of this step—and, without directly disclosing the cause, had, in some degree, prepared her for it. Her appearance, however, in her native village—we

call it a village, although it was the dilapidated town of A——r——excited a considerable sensation, as the phrase runs. Indeed, it soon became the subject of surprise, curiosity, and inquiry among the inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhood, and ultimately throughout the whole parish. But what occasioned the greatest possible interest was the extraordinary improvement in her looks and the elegance of her person. She was not yet out of youth, but she certainly was in that delightful stage of female life when the exquisite freshness of youthful beauty is at its highest and most delicate perfection. She was, indeed, a radiant creature; and nothing astonished them so much as the development of grace and loveliness, and ease of manner, which had taken place during her absence.

Her sensible mother, however, to whom she at once disclosed all the circumstances that had occasioned her return, soon satisfied their enquiries by stating, that she had come home to conduct *her* business upon a superior and more extensive scale, and that she hoped the ladies of rank and station in the neighbourhood would

support them, now that they could have their dresses made up in the most fashionable and elegant manner. There was a strange but interesting pensiveness about her, however, which did not pass without observation. Some attributed it to a disappointment in love, others, on the contrary, said that such a thing was impossible in one so exceedingly beautiful; whilst others again said, it was nothing but the seriousness which usually attaches to the youthful female, on the approach of womanhood.

When Clinton waited on Dr. Spillar the next day according to appointment, he found the old gentleman much perplexed upon the subject of the proposal made to him.

“My good, but unreflecting young friend,” said he, “this is a business surrounded by many doubts and difficulties. In the first place let me ask whether you have calculated upon the girl’s refusal to comply with this extraordinary proposition? In the next place, do you think your mother could be prevailed upon to sanction it? because if she could, I have no doubt that Miss Brindsley would then consent,—but I am afraid not otherwise; and lastly, unless you get

your mother's consent, I will have nothing to do with it. I could not, consistently with my character, dream of lending myself to such a clandestine arrangement as this ; so far as I am concerned, it would be a most unjustifiable and unbecoming step. Suppose, for instance, your marriage should turn out an unhappy one—as it is known many a love marriage does—what would be the consequence so far as I am concerned ? why, that if I should live until then, my very name would be execrable to you both, and should I be in my grave, that my memory would be loaded with your curses.”

“ Well, I do not think, my dear doctor, that you have much to apprehend from the last calculation, but what strikes me as most necessary to be considered, is the possibility of gaining over my mother ; from the tenderness and affection which she bears me, I think the matter by no means hopeless.”

“ In that case you should write to her.”

“ No, but you shall—you can say more for me—yes, and for Maria too, than I could ; because,” he added smiling, “ she knows that you are not in love with her.”

"I assure you there are some people of a different opinion," replied the doctor, smiling in return. "But in the meantime I will mention what I conceive to be a better plan. Instead of writing to your mother, I shall go and pay her a visit; you know we have long been on intimate terms. I can then discuss the subject with her at greater length than I could in any written communication whatsoever. If I do not succeed, I shall proceed no farther in it; and if I do I can see Miss Brindsley, and, fortified by your mother's authority and consent, I shall most likely be able to complete the arrangements at once. "Still," he added, "I am of opinion upon second thoughts, that you should also write to her, as the more influence we can bring to bear upon her, the greater the chance of our success."

Clinton was in ecstasies, delighted; enraptured at this position of the case, he shook the doctor's hand, said he was a friend and a father to him, and as such he would consider him to the last day of his life, whether they succeeded or not.

“God bless you, my dear doctor,” he said,
‘God for ever bless you, for I think you are
likely to prove my guardian angel.”

The doctor smiled, and replied :

“Homo sum nihil humani a me alienum puto.”

CHAPTER XII.

OLD SAM WALLACE AGAIN AT WORK—THE MINISTER PLEADS
FOR HIMSELF—MARIA WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE, AND *NOT*
FOUND WANTING—THE PROJECT ACCOMPLISHED.

MARIA, on the first Sunday morning after her return, began to think of going to church,—to that church in which Clinton and she had felt the first tender but mysterious influences of love. A difficulty, however, lay in her way, resulting from the consciousness of her position with respect to the young officer, and of the last scene which had taken place between them. She knew she would certainly meet his mother there, and that the good lady would probably enter into conversation with her, and possibly make enquiries as to the cause of her having left the establishment of Miss Travers. Such a *rencontre* she wished to avoid, because even although Mrs. Clinton might not speak to, or make any enquiries from her on that occasion, yet she deemed it not improbable that she might,

after having seen that she had returned, make it a point to call to her mother's for the purpose. She consequently resolved not to go.

"Mother," said she, "I think I will go to the Presbyterian chapel to-day ; Mrs. Clinton may see me, and perhaps make enquiries that might embarrass me,—because it is painful to conceal the truth should she press me earnestly. In order to avoid the risk of meeting her, I will go to the meeting-house at Carntaul."

"Indeed Maria," replied her mother, "I dare say it is better that you should ; if Mrs. Clinton sees you, she will certainly speak to you, and make enquiries too, for which reason I think it is better that you should avoid her."

Maria accordingly made her appearance at the meeting-house, and we need scarcely say that her presence, even among the grave worshippers in that sober congregation, created something like a sensation. All eyes from time to time were turned upon her, not only with looks of admiration, but also with those of profound respect. Indeed some of them had taken it into their heads that she might have experienced such an accession of that inward light, as

led her to see the errors of the carnal church to which she belonged, and to seek the true path in a more apostolic communion.

The officiating minister was no other than her former lover, who having concluded the ordinary portion of the service which precedes the sermon, ascended the pulpit and commenced his discourse. Maria could not help admiring his tall gentlemanly figure,—his high forehead and pale intellectual but careworn features. His voice was music itself, but it seemed the exponent of some deep and settled melancholy, which breathed even through the most consoling revelations of faith, and grace, and hope. He was indeed an earnest and devoted minister, and until his sermon nearly reached its conclusion, his eye had not discovered or rested upon Maria. The moment it did however, a change sudden and extraordinary came over the whole melancholy but profound spirit of his eloquence. The sublime inspiration of the prophet and the evangelist seemed to have abandoned him. The full and musical voice lost its power and became unsteady; the fluency of his eloquence was gone,—he began to hesitate in his expressions,

and to repeat himself ; and finding that he could not close his discourse as he had commenced and continued it, he abruptly brought it to a close,—considerably to the surprise of the whole congregation, with the exception of the members of his own family and a few others who had been aware of his unhappy attachment to Maria, and who now looked upon his break-down with the deepest compassion, knowing, as they did, that it was her presence which occasioned it. Even Maria herself, whose eye had unconsciously met his, was not ignorant of the cause, nor was there any one there more capable of feeling a deeper sympathy with this interesting but unhappy young minister. It was evident that absence had not lessened his attachment, nor withdrawn the sorrow of disappointment,—perhaps of despair—from a heart which seemed from its constancy capable of feeling but one attachment, the memory of which should accompany him through a lonely and melancholy life.

The poor minister, after his return home, was evidently sunk in the deepest dejection. He declined to join their early dinner, and walked out into the fields, meditating upon the vision

of beauty which had so unexpectedly appeared to him, and against the influence of which, even in the pulpit, his heart was so badly prepared. He had—it is true—his dreams of hope, and imagination threw some of her most brilliant lights into the dark shadows by which his heart was encompassed. What could have brought her, who belonged to a different though kindred creed, there? Was it that her heart had at last relented, and she resorted to that delicate mode of insinuating as much? She had never been there before; or had some kind friend made her acquainted with the wretched isolation of his life, since she left that part of the country, and did her kind and gentle spirit feel compassion for his desolation? But then her beauty : in so short a time what an astonishing change, what a wonderful progress in grace and loveliness, since he had seen her last! And could it be possible that he might even yet have a chance of hope? In this way the poor young man went on building his ideal castles, as he sauntered slowly and meditatively along, until the shades of evening began to fall.

Now, it is a pretty well-known axiom, that

people will generally reason in the same way when they have the same facts placed before them, we mean in the ordinary circumstances of life only, because in religion or politics, although the facts may be the same, yet, guided by our prejudices alone, the inferences we draw from them are either north or south, according to the influence of those prejudices. On this occasion old Sam, however, reasoned precisely as his youngest son did.

"Joe," said he to his elder, "what do *you* think o' yon? What brought her to the meeting-house the day, where she never was in all her life afore? What do ye thing o' that, man?"

"I don't know what to think of it," replied Joe, "it looks odd enough."

"How odd enough? What do ye mean by odd enough?"

"Why," replied Joe again, "I can't account for it."

"No, I know you can't, but am not sae—Dei'l a ane o' yon wean—wean!—haith, she's no a wean now; wouh mon, but she's a bonnie creature; but am sayin', deil a ane o' her ever came to meetin' without a purpose, and what do ye

call that purpose? Saul, it's as clear as day that she has a hankerin afther him. The lassie's sensible, and reflected on her conduct till him; and now that she's sorry for't, she wishes to let him see as much; deil anither thing it is."

"Well, but what's to be done then," said Joe: "must we court her for him again?"

"Nae doubt o't, but a'll open a new leaf wi' her now, an if I dinna make her show what for she came to meetin' the day instead o' goin' to church,—that mess o' worldly abomination,—why, am not here,—that's all."

"I think," said Joe, "we had better do nothing in the matter until we see himself, and have some conversation with him on the subject."

"Weel, Joe, a don't differ from you there; a think you're right; an' when he comes home, and gets something to eat, a'll cross-examine him on the subject."

When the minister returned in the evening, calm and somewhat more placid than usual, for truth to say, hope had kindled up new aspirations in his heart, he took a slight dinner and a single glass of wine, after which his father came into the room and addressed him as follows :

“ Weel minister, what do ye think o’ yon appearance at meetin’ the day ? Dinna ye think it looks weel, eh ?

“ To what do you allude, father ?”

“ Hout man, what the deil nonsense is this ? a mean yon bonnie wean o’ Mrs. Brindsley’s—no that she’s a wean now ; what do you suppose brought her to our place o’ sensible worship this day, instead o’ going to yon pack of abominations that’s set forth in the cathedral, as they caal it ; e’en the very name’s a remnant o’ popery.”

“ My dear father,” replied the son, “ will I never be able to prevail upon you to judge and think of those who differ with you in religious matters with more charity ?”

“ Charity ! you can’t charge me wi’ ony want o’ charity towards them, barrin in religion—a befriend the lost creatures, a serve them when a can, a lend them money when they want it, a leave no christian duty undone ; and a may say the same o’ the poor papishes, that’s doubly lost, because they worship the pape,—poor benighted heathens ; but religion’s anither guess matter, and on that subject deil

a one o' me will spare either ane or 'tother o' them. Howsomever, let us drap that ; yon girl hasna' forgotten you, that's a clear case."

"Father, I am too much of a visionary myself," replied his son, "and I beg of you not to tempt me with false and delusive hopes ; her presence at meeting to day may have been accidental only."

"Weel, man, be that as it may, we'll see about it ; a'll go to the mither to-morrow and have a talk wi' her about it, or if a can see the lassie hersel' it'll be better still ; a think a know how to manage these things, or if a didn't, who'd be your mother the day ?"

"Are you determined on going, father ?"

"Ay faith, ye might preach it from the pulpit."

"Well, listen to me, my dear father ; you may go and see Mrs. Brindsley and Maria, if you wish, but I beg—earnestly beg, that you will do nothing more than intimate to them, that I myself will call there the day after to-morrow, in order to solicit an interview with Maria herself."

"Weel, a'll say that too, but in troth a'll say

more than that ; but are you goin' to pluck up courage to face her yourself ?”

“ It is possible—barely possible, that she may have changed, but no, it is a dream—it is a dream !” he exclaimed ; “ at all events I will see her, but I wish you to prepare herself and her mother for the visit.”

He then went to his room, where he sat in apparently deep thought, occasionally looking into a book, then carelessly shutting it, until the hour of rest arrived, when he retired to bed.

The next day about one o'clock, old Sam, big with the certainty of success, was abroad upon his mission, and soon arrived at the neat cottage of Mrs. Brindsley. He was dressed in his Sunday suit, which consisted of a brown coat, black waistcoat, dark drab breeches and leggings of the same cloth, all surmounted by a good hat somewhat broad in the brim, and all in fact betokening the douce but sober presbyterian costume.

“ Weel Mistress Brindsley, how is a' wi' you the day, me'em ?”

“ Indeed, quite well Mr. Wallace, how are all your own family ?”

"Ow, no that ill, barrin' yon unfortunate minister."

"Why, is he not well?"

"Troth, he's no very weel in health, but worse in spirits, poor man."

"Why what is the matter, with him? indeed, of late he seems pale and thin; I hope there is nothing seriously wrong with him."

"'Am fear't there is, Mistress Brindsley; deil haet but the truth a'll tell ye; that bonnie lassie o' yours is just killin' him by inches."

"Good heavens, Mr. Wallace, is it possible he hasn't got over that weakness yet?"

"Quite possible, and what's worse, never will, unless she takes pity on the poor boy."

"I assure you, Mr. Wallace, I am sorry to hear this; I thought his own good sense, and the influence of religion, might have come to his relief."

"Good sense! hae you ony sense to say so when you know he's in love. Religion! what's religion but a bubble, a strae, a cobweb, when a young man like him gets over head and eurs into that commodity."

"She's an unfortunate girl," replied her

mother, "and I must say a very self-willed one on that subject. She has had no less than two offers since she came, and has rejected them both, and if she refused your son, Mr. Wallace, you know it was contrary to my wishes ; I did and said what I could for him."

"Twa offers—what twa offers?"

"Why, indeed, there's William Calwell, the attorney, a handsome young man, who's both clever and successful at his profession, and quite unobjectionable in every sense, yet she has refused him."

"Weel, and who's the other?"

"A man you well know, and who's well known by every one as one of the best and most sterling-hearted men in the county that produced him, honest James Trimble."

"Hout, woman, he might be her father, still he's aall you say, nae doubt o' that ; weel, she refused him too, mair be token it would be just ridiculous to see such a match. But am sayin', what if the bonnie good-natured lassie should hae changed her mind anent the poor minister."

Mrs. Brindsley shook her head as she replied—
"indeed, Mr. Wallace, I'm afraid there's no hope

of that ; as for my part I wish there was, because nothing would gratify me more. I don't know any one I would rather call son-in-law than your son."

"A believe you me'em, and many thanks for your good opinion o' him ; but 'am sayin', Mistress Brindsley, couldna' you wheedle her intil compliance ?—couldna' ye ?"

"Indeed, unfortunately, Mr. Wallace, she's just one of those girls that nobody *could* wheedle."

"Weel then, couldna' ye come down upon her wi' the lawful influence o' maternal authority, as they caall it."

"No—no, Mr. Wallace, I could never think of forcing my child's inclinations. It will be time enough to try that when I find her about to enter into a connexion that I cannot approve of."

"Is the lassie hersel' within ?"

"No, she went to spend the day with a couple of her old school-fellows, and won't be home till evening."

"Because, if she was, I'd like to hae a spell o' discourse wi' hersel upon the matter. How-

somever, it can't be helped now, only as 'am here, the minister desired me to let you and her know that he'll be wi' you the morrow, and speak till you both on the subject, and haith he must be far gone in it when so blate a poor lad as he is, makes bould to pluck up courage at last. After that, deil a doubt o't but he'd take a fortified town any day. But ow, Mistress Brindsley, if she doesna' come in, what a miss she'll ha'e o' him ; you don't know the learnin' o' yon youth ; deil a thing in books or out o' books comes wrong to him,—Latin, Greek, Hebrew, mathematics, a' at his finger ends ; and for that matter, I dinna ken but he might teach them to her ; deil a yerb or weed about the place but he could tell you the history of ; and sure he knows how they manage to make the light run for miles under ground, and spout up out o' pipes in the streets o' Dublin. But about his knowledge, he'll have a better thing, and that, as I said afore, will be one half my property, and a think any one can tell you what that is, ay, an a'll take care that he makes a genteel settlement on her ; am sayin' this, now, because if he speaks till her the morrow, the poor absent creature

will never think o't. So a'll wish you good bye, and if you can pit in a good word for him between this and then, do it."

"I assure you, that so far as I am concerned, Mr. Wallace, the match has my most hearty approbation ; however, as you say, let them see one another to morrow, and either make or mar it, although I can tell you beforehand, that I have little hope it will be a match."

Old Sam, on his way home, thought, in the depth of his sagacity, that the match was a sure case ; he had in fact got `up a theory on the subject, which was, that the widow was only fighting shy in the matter, and that she had mentioned the proposals of William Calwell and James Trimble as an indirect stimulus to urge on the match with her daughter.

"A see," he said to himself, as he went home, "she's a nice one yon ; deil a thing she was doin' but playin' me aff. Weel then, who can blame her ? as for me, a won't quarrel wi' her for that, —only its a pleasant thing to see that there's a good look up for the minister, poor man."

His appearance at home was like that of the messenger with glad tidings, for in spite of his

presbyterian caution, he felt too much reliance in his own penetration to imagine for a moment that he could have been mistaken.

"Weel minister," said he, when he saw his son, "they say all is not goold that glitters, but a say that every thing looks weel yonder. I didna see the lassie hersel', but a did her mother, and what do ye think she tauld me? Why, that she refused two offers for your sake—no that she said for *your* sake, but I knew her meanin' by her mumpin; haith boy, I think ye'll carry it wi' a flowin' sail the morrow."

The fine eyes of his poor son gleamed with an expression of joy; he took his father's hand and shook it warmly and tenderly, and as he did the tears fell down his pale cheeks.

"God bless you my dear father," said he,—
"God bless you, you have exerted yourself kindly and affectionately for the happiness of your son; and so after all, the *dream* of yesterday was not an empty and illusive fantasy! Thank God; but the happiness will I fear be too great, more than I will be able to bear, for I am not strong, my father."

"You are to see her the morrow at one
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o'clock," replied the old man, "but don't be disheartened, but speak till her like a man, face to face."

"I will go now and walk in the fields," replied his son, where for the present we will leave him to his dreams and meditations.

The next day he dressed himself with more than usual care. On surveying his face in the glass, he could not avoid remarking that his features, as well as his whole person, had become gradually more attenuated, notwithstanding the extreme care which he had taken, especially at the request of his family, of his declining health. The deep lustre of his eyes was startling, but on this occasion he attributed it to the hopeful and consolatory intelligence which his father had brought him the day before. His temperament, at once timid and enthusiastic, was not such as qualified him to wrestle successfully with the cares and disappointments of life. His organization was too refined and delicate for that. As it was, it would be difficult to see a more striking, or interesting figure than his; the predominant expression of his features was that of benignity and thought,

saddened a good deal into a character of care that sometimes seemed mournful. Indeed, we might almost say that ever since his rejection by Maria, his manner, appearance, and whole figure, had become the ideal of deep and profound sorrow.

Another point for observation in connexion with him, was the extreme whiteness and delicacy of his hands. They had, indeed, been always beautiful, but of late they became more soft,—far whiter than usual, and of a burning heat, and sometimes his pale complexion became so flushed, that he appeared the very picture of health.

On approaching Mrs. Brindsley's cottage, he felt his moral strength gradually abandoning him, his heart palpitated with excitement, and his very limbs grew feeble under him. He paused several times, and was about to return home and ask his father or brother to accompany him, at least to the house. He would have given any thing for some adventitious assistance. But although his resolution was weak, his reason was strong, and on reverting to the confidence in his success expressed by his father,

he felt ashamed of his timidity, and resolved to advance. On getting within a few perches of the house, however, he paused again, and would probably have returned, were it not that Mrs. Brindsley happened to come out for the purpose of driving away some young calves, that had come in among the flowers which she cultivated in the front garden. Having seen him standing as it were irresolute, she spoke to him, and with much kindness asked him would he not come in and rest himself? This encouraged him, and on approaching her she shook hands with him, and brought him into the house. It would seem as if preparation had been made for this visit. The work-women were not within, and Mrs. Brindsley herself, as she told him, was going into the town to make some purchases.

"Maria, however," said she "is at home, and will entertain you, Mr. Wallace."

Now all this corroborated what his father had intimated, and we need not say that whilst it gave him courage, it also agitated his heart with still greater tenderness for the object of his melancholy passion. After having introduced him and Maria to each other—for although

near neighbours, they had never yet spoken—Mrs. Brindsley put on her shawl and bonnet, and left them together. Many a description has been given of such situations, and of the mutual embarrassment under which the lovers labour for want of knowing what to say, or how to break the ice of ceremony on such trying occasions. As it was, Wallace became the hue of death, and Maria, from pure compassion, commenced the conversation.

“Mr. Wallace,” said she, “I hope you have not been unwell since I had the pleasure of seeing you last, now a good many months ago. I think you look somewhat paler and thinner than you did then.”

Wallace's voice betrayed his emotion as he spoke—“Yes,” he replied, “I have not been well ; that is, I can complain of nothing in the shape of sickness or of any positive complaint, but I have not been happy ; I have had much care pressing upon me—here,” he added, placing his white but sickly-looking hand upon his heart. “I have contracted a great disrelish for society ; I take a melancholy pleasure in leading a lonely life ; perhaps it is wrong, but it is not

without its pleasure, although that pleasure is indeed a mournful one."

Maria perfectly well understood him, but she felt that the shadow of the unfortunate young man's melancholy was, in spite of her, falling upon her spirit.

"But you have your sacred profession and its duties, Mr. Wallace ; ought they not to cheer you, and to engage you in such a way, as to occupy your mind, and prevent it from dwelling upon anything that might cause you pain ?"

"Do not allude to that, Miss Brindsley," he replied, "oh, do not. There is when as a minister of God I feel how unworthy I have become of the office."

"You !" she replied, "why, sir, I cannot plead ignorance of your well-known character, nor of the hidden benevolence and charity for which your name is proverbial. *You* may consider it hidden, but I assure you it is not. If you have any private care, surely it cannot be such, I should hope, as to affect your happiness. You who make so many others happy, ought certainly to be happy yourself."

"It might be so, Miss Brindsley, if my heart

were in my office, but indeed, I can scarcely speak upon this subject ; I am like a house divided against itself. I often think I have never been designed for the ministry, and that I have, without due consideration of my own disposition and character, only intruded myself into it. If I had known as much of my own heart at an earlier period as I do now, I don't think I would ever have undertaken duties which at present I feel myself incapable of performing with an undivided spirit."

Maria could not help admiring the strange candour with which he exaggerated the morbid and ideal shortcomings of his public duty—shortcomings which she knew existed only in his own distempered imagination. Her interest and her sympathy with the unfortunate gentleman increased every moment, especially when she saw the humility with which he avoided as long, it would seem, as he could, the very object of his visit there.

"But could you not seek spiritual support from some of your brother clergymen by consulting with them as to the care that oppresses you, or rather could you not seek support from

the author of all comfort ? It must be a serious thing that so deeply oppresses your spirit."

"It is a serious thing, Miss Brindsley, because the happiness of my whole life is involved in it. I know not what I would say, nor how to say it. I am inexperienced in the proper manner of approaching a subject on which I feel depends either my life or death. Miss Brindsley—Miss Brindsley, have compassion on me ! Do you not understand me ?"

This sudden appeal to her compassion, uttered in such a voice of profound sorrow and wretchedness, completely overcame her. His earnest enthusiasm, joined to a spirit of such touching and melancholy pathos, moistened her eyes in spite of every effort to the contrary ; she could not speak.

"Alas, do you not understand me ? Do you not know—can you not guess, that the secret source of all my sorrow—of all my care—of all my despair—is my love for you ? You know not how I have struggled with it even since you left me hopeless. You know not what the silent agony of the heart is when wasting away under the influence of a despairing passion—a

passion which even despair itself cannot annihilate. You owe me some reparation, for you have, I fear, although unconsciously, withdrawn me from God. I cannot banish you either from my heart or imagination. You possess a double hold upon me ; yet what efforts have I not made to forget you. This is not a subject for reason, because it is a subject of the heart, which never reasons. If I have erred in loving you, oh forgive and pardon me, for you see by those tears what I have been made to suffer, what I *am* suffering for it ; say you will only forgive me, for, I think, of all men, I am the most unhappy.'

Maria could not hear this agony of her unfortunate lover without emotion ; her tears flowed copiously, but she knew not, in fact, how to reply to him.

" I know not what to say," she returned ; " it is a dreadful task to me to deprive you of hope, or to weigh such a gentle and affectionate heart as yours down with sorrow ; but alas, Mr. Wallace, I can give you no consolation."

" Oh, do not say so !" he replied, deeply agitated ; " consider that the happiness, perhaps here and hereafter, of a fellow-creature, depends

upon your word. Look at my wasting figure, and you may easily conjecture what I have suffered. Despair will kill me—kill me slowly, and so much the worse. Indeed, it is not so much for your love I plead as for my life, for I feel that the one is bound up with the other. Oh, could you but only love me !”

“ My dear friend,” she replied—“ for I will call you so—let me assure you that you have my respect, my esteem, my affection as a sister ; but, alas, I cannot give you my love, although, as you see, I can give you my tears and my sympathy for this unhappy attachment, by which I feel so much honoured. Now, hear me, and collect yourself ; where is your fortitude ?”

“ Alas, I feel that I have none ; under the influence of this passion I am like a reed shaken by the wind.”

“ Well, even so, but you must endeavour to regain some moral strength.”

“ How can I do so if you refuse me your love ? Think of what I have lost by it, and of the desolation of heart which will shatter and prostrate me if you withhold it. I am pleading for the welfare of my soul now as well as for my

life and happiness. Think I say of what I have lost by it ; my spirit has been withdrawn from the sacred mission which I entered into with perfect sincerity ; my heart, as a minister of God, has been alienated from the fold that has been entrusted to me ; it is elsewhere—it is with you. I am, as it were, an apostate from the faith, for your sake, and in what a dark position is this for a man who has undertaken the discharge of such high and holy duties to stand. Reflect, then, that this dreadful struggle is wasting my life, sapping the very powers of my existence, and all because my unhappy heart is fixed upon you. But, oh ! only give me your love, and I will return to the fold which I am neglecting, to those duties in which my spirit is not ; yes, I will return to them with an ardour which will compensate for all I have omitted. Restore me to my mission, restore me to my health, pour the light of gladness upon my heart ; I beg, I entreat you, have compassion upon me and save me !”

“ I have—I have compassion upon you,” she replied, seizing both his hands, “but my compassion is all I can bestow. Now, hear *me*,”

she continued, "you imagine that your unhappiness is great, perhaps mine is greater still. You know not what I may even now suffer on my own account, neither can I disclose it to you, although if I did, it would reflect no dishonour on myself. I am not only unhappy, but wretched. My love I cannot give you, because it has been bestowed upon another, who would return it a thousandfold, if I accepted his. This, from the best motives, I have refused to do, and by this sacrifice to a sense of what is right, I have sealed my own misery for life. You, my dear friend, have not, then, all the sorrow to yourself."

The poor young man placed his hands upon his temples. "I care not," said he. "I have not heard you, I have not understood you, but I feel that I am desolate. Ichabod, the glory of my mission and of my life is departed, and my place shall soon know me no more."

He rose to depart, and as he was about to go, she seized his hand and said: "Farewell, my dear friend, farewell—you may yet be happy; as for me I never can."

He shook his head mournfully, and repeated the words, "Ichabod, the glory of my mission

and of my life has departed ; I am desolate ;” but he added, looking upon her with such a look of sorrow as smote her again to the heart ; “ Might I ask, before I leave you, one last favour ?”

“ What is it, Mr. Wallace ? if I can with propriety comply with it, most assuredly I will.”

“ It is not for the sake of memory,” he added ; “ you are *there* for ever, but some slight token that I might look upon as coming from you. You gave me your tears this day—I will often give you mine. You would not refuse me what I ask ?”

In an instant she started up, and getting a pair of scissors which lay on a little side-table, she went to a looking-glass, and dishevelled her luxuriant head of hair, she cut off a tress, and tying into a knot, said : “ Keep this for my sake Mr. Wallace, and remember me as one who respects, esteems, and admires you, and who would love you if she could, and who now says, that you are worthy of a better love than hers.”

He took her hand, whilst his tears fell

fast,—and he looked upon her. “ Might I kiss your hand ?” said he.

“ Here is my cheek,” she replied ; “ for the first and the last time,” and he kissed her, not without tears, with a delicacy which showed that he understood the chaste and compassionate spirit in which the favour was offered.

After he had gone Maria sat down and wept, but her tears were not *all* for him.

When poor Wallace returned home, his face had the shadow of death on it. His father and brother approached to hear the result of his visit ; but he waved them away with his hand, and sitting down, placed the other over his eyes, exclaiming, as before,

“ Ichabod, the glory of my mission and my life has departed ; I am desolate !”

His father and brother felt that it was no time to disturb or intrude on him. They consequently retired to another room, when his affectionate brother said to the old man, “ Father, my brother’s heart is broken ; I read it in his face,” and he burst into tears.

This episode of sorrow we may as well close

here. He never recovered the shock of his disappointment. Decline, which was hereditary in the family, had been secretly at work before the occurrence of this melancholy interview. He wasted away, week by week, gradually and slowly, until, at the expiration of about seven months afterwards, this melancholy young man, so full of promise, so accomplished, so learned, and so eloquent, laid his head down in the bloom of youth, but in a spirit of calmness and resignation, and was freed from those cares and sorrows of the heart which laid him low. The tress he had received from Maria was, at his own request, placed upon his heart, where he had always worn it, and buried with him.

Some weeks had now elapsed, and Maria's damask cheek began to exhibit evidences that the "worm" was "feeding" on it. True it is that the fair but sorrowful girl "pined in thought," but with her usual firmness and energy, she devoted herself with assiduity to the labour of life allotted to her, and by this means—the best-known preservative against care—she grappled with the deep anguish which was consuming her. One day she was surprised by a

visit from Mrs. Clinton, who called, as she said, to have some private conversation with her. This intimation made the colour to come and go on her cheek, and her heart to palpitate so violently, that she thought that her powers of respiration were about to be suspended. Mrs. Clinton at once observed her confusion, and said :

“ Don’t be alarmed Maria ; I am about to speak to you as a friend.”

“ You have always been so to me, madam,” replied Maria.

“ Well then,” proceeded that lady, “ I am about to ask you some questions, which I trust you will answer me candidly and fully.”

“ I shall certainly do so, madam,” replied Maria ; “ if the questions regard only myself.”

“ You became acquainted with my son in A——h ?”

“ It is due to myself to say, that I did not become willingly acquainted with him ; I did every thing that the circumstances under which I was placed enabled me, to decline any acquaintance with him. It was forced upon me altogether against my will ; and it was to avoid

he acquaintance you allude to that I am here to-day."

"My son offered you marriage?"

"He did, madam; but I declined that also."

"This I think strange," observed Mrs. Clinton; "upon what principle did you reject a proposal which most young persons in your condition of life would have seized on with eagerness?"

"Simply, madam, because I *was* in that condition of life, and that I knew my compliance with such an offer, although it might elevate me, must degrade him. I felt that I was not a fit companion for him; that he could neither introduce me to his family and connexions, nor to the world at large, because I was not qualified to move as his wife ought to move in that station of life to which he would raise me."

"Had you any other motives?"

"I felt, madam, that it would have been making an ungrateful return to you, who proved yourself my friend and protectress."

"Then you have, upon the grounds you mention, finally and irrevocably declined to marry my son?"

"It is perfectly true, madam," returned Maria ;
"and what is more, I have not the slightest intention of changing my purpose, a fact of which your son is finally aware ; for I mentioned it to him as my last unalterable resolution."

"Strange girl," exclaimed Mrs. Clinton ;
"why would you thus throw away fortune ?"

"Because, madam, I am not qualified to accept it, nor willing to do so, when the penalty your son must pay, would be his own shame and degradation. Indeed I don't think that either of us could be long happy ; he might soon become tired of the taunts and insults offered to both of us, and as a natural consequence, he would find his low-born wife nothing but a drag and an incumbrance upon him. We should have the whole world against us, especially that part of it in which we should live. Your son, it is true, offered to retire from the world on my account ; but do you think, madam, that I could suffer him to bury his brilliant talents in obscurity, or to withdraw, on my account, from the fame and distinction which may be before him ? Sooner than he should

sacrifice himself for me I would sacrifice my——”

She paused, and her eyes filled with tears.

“Speak on, Maria,” said Mrs. Clinton ;
“what would you sacrifice ?”

“I would sacrifice the happiness of my life for him,” she added, still weeping, for the poor girl was fairly overcome.

“Maria,” said Mrs. Clinton, “you love my son ?”

Maria was silent, but her tears still flowed.

“Maria, the truth ?—conceal nothing from me—I expect the truth, and nothing else from you.”

“But I do not wish to incur your anger, madam.”

“You have not incurred my anger so far ;—but as I said—and if you be the girl I believe you to be—you will conceal nothing from me.”

“Then, madam,” replied the high-minded girl, “it is because of my love for him that I act as I do. I forget myself, and can only think of him, and what he can and will be by forgetting me. I trust, madam, you will not be angry with me for this confession. I am lowly born, and not

qualified by education and the accomplishments which every well-bred girl possesses, to pass through the world as his wife."

"But, Maria, listen ! If I should give my consent to your marriage with him, would you urge any further objection ?"

"I would, madam—the same objections which I have urged already. I am not qualified to discharge the high duties of his wife, nor to mingle in polished society, and sustain both my own character there, and his, and as *his wife ought* to do."

"That will do, Maria—pardon me a moment. There is a gentleman—an old friend of yours—waiting without in the carriage, who is anxious to see you; and what is more," she added, "he has a proposal to make to you."

Mrs. Clinton went to the cottage door, and holding up her hand, beckoned to some one who was evidently awaiting the signal within. The servant immediately let down the steps, and our old acquaintance, the historian, came out and approached the cottage. Mrs. Clinton, who had gone out as far as the garden-gate to meet him, said :

"She is wonderful, doctor ; it is almost incredible, and I could not have believed it, had I not heard it from her own lips. The wealth of Europe is beneath her value ; come in now and mention our project ; her mother is out with her workwomen in the back garden, where they retired, until Maria and I should have finished our conversation, but we must call her in."

We need not dwell at any length upon the project for her education, because the reader is already acquainted with it, but we may simply say, that sanctioned as it was by Mrs. Clinton herself, and the eminent divine and historian, both Maria and her mother at length consented, and every arrangement was made.

"Now Maria," said Mrs. Clinton, "you say you are lowly born, and in one sense so you are, but on the other hand you are *not* of a lowly family. The good doctor here, who is not only a great historian, but consequently a deep genealogist, tells me that your family were once both wealthy and respectable, and that of one thing you may feel proud—I mean next to the possession of your own exalted character and virtues—that Brindsley Sheridan, the eminent

statesman, orator, and dramatist, derived a portion of his blood from your family. He was an Irishman ; and what Irishman, or Irishwoman either, lives with a love of freedom in their hearts, who has not a right to feel proud of *him*? The light of such a name is enough to throw back lustre upon the obscurity of the humblest family for generations."

CHAPTER XIII.

MARIA AT SCHOOL—HER FAITHFULNESS TO CLINTON—STRANGE
DISCOVERY—JOY AND SORROW.

THE reader sees, that however slowly the fate of our heroine is progressing, yet what that fate is to be, we cannot in justice to ourselves attempt in this state of the narrative to disclose. This would be raising the curtain too soon, so that the the gentle reader, if he or she feel impatience, as we hope they do, must check that impatience until the proper *dénouement* or *dénouements*—for there are too of them—shall be arrived at in due course.

We said at the close of the last chapter, that the arrangements for Maria's education and accomplishments were made, and this was true. The prudent but generous and affectionate mother, however, acted in the matter more from the tenderness which she felt for her son, than from free and spontaneous inclination. She would rather, considering all things that ought to

be considered, that this union should not take place. Dr. Spillar, however, having represented to her the determination of her son to sell out of the army, and become an unsettled and unhappy wanderer beyond the bounds of Europe itself; and knowing, as she did, the natural vehemence and determination of his character, she became alarmed, and was finally prevailed upon to consent, which she did; as the reader has seen, with a very good grace. Still, the character of the high-born and prudent mother peeped out in the shape of the following condition: If, at the expiration, or any time before it, of the term necessary for Maria's complete acquirement of all that a liberal and accomplished education could bestow, her son should, during his intercourse with the world, happen to meet a lady in his own rank of life, whom he might prefer, it was to be understood that Maria should rest satisfied with this change; but that in the meantime Mrs. Clinton would, under these circumstances, support Maria at school until her education should be finished; after which she was to present her with a sum of five hundred pounds,

that she might be enabled to settle herself respectably in life. With a feeling of womanly delicacy, however, which certainly did her honour, she told Maria that no person should defray the expenses of her education but herself, (Mrs. Clinton) alone. And so she did, from first to last.

Under those circumstances, and on those conditions, Dr. Spillar, herself, and Maria proceeded as privately as possible to Dublin, where her outfit—and an elegant one it was—under the care and management of Mrs. Clinton, was duly provided; after which the good old doctor and she set sail for London.

Poor Maria felt as in a dream. She could scarcely believe that the incidents of the last few days were real. What was her fate to be? She loved Clinton with a rare and noble affection, but might not his mother's foresight prove correct? and in that case, where was her dream of happiness? Should a young man like him, ardent and susceptible, and mingling with the highest-born beauties of aristocratic life, endowed with fortune, education, accomplishments, and honourable connexions, could he, under cir-

cumstances of such temptation, possibly stand out against them, and prove himself not only faithful to the obscure object of his first affection, but capable of setting the scorn and censure of the world at defiance? She trembled when she thought of all this, and it required all the kindness and benevolent eloquence of the good old doctor to console and sustain her.

In this state of doubt and uncertainty, she and the doctor arrived in London, where, by the direction of Mrs. Clinton, who had given the doctor letters of introduction, the worthy gentlemen was enabled, without loss of time, to place Maria in one of the first establishments in that great metropolis. She entered as a young lady of a respectable but reduced family, whose instructions, in consequence of their decline, had been neglected, but whose prospects in life were such as rendered it necessary that she should receive an accomplished education. She was a protégée of an Irish lady of rank and family, who would, through him, punctually and regularly discharge all the necessary expenses, and who wished besides, that none should be spared, nor anything left undone to render the

course of her acquirements such as became a lady of the highest fashion.

When the doctor was about to take his farewell of her, she became deeply affected, and wept bitterly.

"Alas, my dear sir," she said, "I feel, now that you are leaving me, as if I were alone in life. Where is there a man, high and eminent as you are, who could have condescended to take the kind and fatherly interest in the poor humble girl which you have taken? You stand towards me now as an affectionate father, and indeed I love you as such. Now that you leave me; I am friendless here."

"No, my dear child," said the doctor, much moved, "you are not friendless here, nor are you, as you know, without friends elsewhere, and loving friends."

"But," she added in tears, "if Clinton should forget me?"

"He will *not* forget you, because I know that beautiful, my dear child, as you are, he loves you for better and higher qualities. Do not make yourself unhappy on that account. Improve yourself as rapidly as you can; you will have an

opportunity of becoming acquainted with all the modern languages, with music, drawing, deportment—you will find the last an easy task—and all the various portions of education which are necessary for the position in life which you will, please God, before long occupy ; but before all things, I beg that you will not neglect the study of history ; it will soothe and calm your spirits, and render your sleep tranquil and profound. Before I go, however, let me impress one principle of action upon your heart.—I speak of religion. Do not neglect its dictates—pray to that God who is about to raise you to high and honourable station in life, to make you worthy of it ; neglect not, above all things, your private devotions, and lastly, place your confidence in God, and he will protect you. We will not neglect to write to you, and we hope both to see by your letters, and to hear from other sources, that your progress in knowledge and improvement, not forgetting history, will be such as we expect.”

Maria parted from him with a sorrowful heart, and indeed the good old man had proved himself, as she said, not only a friend but

father to her at a time when very few of his rank and position in life would have felt any particular interest in an humble and obscure girl who had no claim upon him but that of Christian duty, a claim too frequently overlooked.

“Truth is strange—stranger than fiction.”

We have placed these words as the motto of our story, and certainly it will be found that their truth in the incidents which are to follow will be strangely corroborated. Of Maria's residence in the establishment selected for her, we have but little to say, except that her progress in the acquisition of knowledge surpassed all the expectations that were formed of her, and the reader knows that these expectations were great. It is not our intention to retard or obstruct our narrative by a quotation of the letters which passed between her and her faithful and noble-hearted lover, his mother, or Dr. Spillar. It is not a very difficult thing, we think, for our readers to imagine them ; and to their imaginations, therefore, we beg to leave them.

At the beginning of her third year, however, an incident occurred, which as it had a singular influence on her future destiny, we must be permitted to mention it here. It is scarcely necessary to say, that wherever Maria went or appeared, her beauty excited both admiration and wonder. Her deportment was so fine and striking, and her manners so easy and polished, that, joined now to her extraordinary loveliness, it is not surprising that her companions, on their return home to their respective families during vacation, should make it the subject of frequent conversation. One of those, who was her friend and companion, and who had become very much attached to her, and indeed the attachment was mutual, was a young lady closely connected by blood to an Irish aristocratic family of high rank. This lady had a cousin, an earl, who became seized with a strong curiosity to see this celebrated beauty. He accordingly made private arrangements with his fair kinswoman to have this desirable consummation brought about, and accordingly one day, after the hours of instruction, he called to see the companion of our heroine. Of course, from his rank and close

relationship with her, he had every reasonable privilege of seeing her. On this occasion she contrived to have Maria with her when he came ; and as the former was about to leave the room at his entrance, both insisted she should remain, assuring her that the visit was merely one of friendship, and that they would absolutely feel quite disappointed if she should go. She was accordingly prevailed upon to stop for a short time, which she did without any apparent reluctance. It is unnecessary here to detail the conversation, which was merely commonplace chat referring, as the young nobleman contrived to turn it, to the woful hardships and sufferings of boarding-school life, and the absolute necessity of being good girls, which he hoped they both were, and of getting off their tasks in such a way as to have nice letters sent home to their friends, who would, of course, make them pretty presents for the same. After some bantering of this kind, Maria left them and retired to her own room.

“ Well, my lord,” said his cousin, smiling in triumph, “ what do you think now ? Have I exaggerated ? ”

"Exaggerated, Emily ! I pledge you my honour, my dear girl, that you are about one of the stupidest daubers I ever met. I should not have known her from the sign-board painting you made of her. Why, the portrait you drew of that divine creature might be hung up in competition with the sign of the Cat and Fiddle, compared to what she is. Good God ! I have never seen anything like her."

"Thank you, my noble cousin, for your compliments, but I assure you her beauty is the least of her gifts ; she is first, and far first here in everything, but above all, in goodnature and kindness to every girl in the school."

"Emily," said he sighing, "I am afraid I will have occasion to regret this visit."

"Why so ? are you caught ?"

He shook his head and mused for a time.

"Emily," he proceeded, "will you befriend me with this lovely girl ? Will you speak well of me—I know you can't speak ill of me—and will you, besides, ascertain for me what opinion she may have formed of me ?"

"That is, provided, my lord, she has formed any."

“Just so; and if she has not, will you try and get her to form a favourable one?”

“Why, you impose this task on me with a very solemn face.”

“At least with a very serious heart, Emily.”

“Serious, my cousin?”

“Yes, serious, do not mistake me; and indeed, to tell you the truth, Emily, I think I have neglected you a good deal since I came to London, but I assure you I shall make it up to you. I will not leave you unvisited so long again.”

Emily laughed at this *ruse*, but his lordship certainly had both a serious and an anxious look, and after some further discourse with his cousin, he took his leave.

“Truth is strange—stranger than fiction.”

Several other visits took place, nor was their frequency diminished by the fact that Maria had expressed to his cousin a very favourable opinion of him. In truth he was an excellent young man, modest, unassuming, and sensible; and Maria candidly said so, because such in truth, were her impressions. This encouraged

him until he began by degrees to express by indirect hints his very serious admiration of our heroine. Maria, on perceiving this, immediately resolved how to act.

"Emily," said she, one day that they were walking in the grounds, "I have observed that whenever your noble cousin visits you here, you contrive to have me present. To this, probably, I should have no objection, were it not for the turn which his lordship contrives to give the conversation. I am sure you understand me."

"I do perfectly, my dear Maria."

"Well, under these circumstances you must allow me to say that I shall no longer *share* his visits with you."

"Perhaps," replied the lively girl, laughing, "you wish to have him all to yourself. If so, so far from having any objection, I shall be very glad of it, and I promise you so will he."

Maria smiled. "No," she returned, "what I mean is simply this, that under no circumstances shall I see his lordship again, whenever he happens to come here."

"But suppose he should come to make you

an offer of his hand and title—suppose he should ask you to become a countess, would you not condescend to see him, and to hear him too? and now, let me tell you Maria, that he is to be here to-morrow for that very purpose, and I think it is due to his rank and his excellent qualities that you should see him.”

“You are perfectly right, Emily, and I will certainly see him; but neither you nor he must draw any favourable inference from this. I will see him, because for his own sake, as well as mine, it is better that I should put him out of a state of uncertainty and suspense.”

“You surely don’t mean to say that you intend to reject him. Have you no ambition, Maria?”

“I have but *one* ambition, Emily, and it is a *great* one.”

“Pray, what is that?”

“*To become wife to the man I love*;—but as for your cousin, most assuredly I shall decline, but with every feeling of respect and goodwill, the generous offers which you say he intends to make me.”

The next day his lordship presented himself,

and Maria received him alone. Whether his fair cousin had given him a hint of the disappointment that awaited him, or whether his own penetration had enabled him to suspect it, we know not, but be this as it may, he appeared in a state of mind evidently disturbed and dejected. The amiable girl at once marked the despondency of this admirable young nobleman, and actually felt compassion for a heart capable of entertaining an attachment so sincere and generous. She accordingly received him with great sweetness and courtesy, and did everything in her power to make him feel at ease.

“Miss Brindsley,” said he, “I know not whether my fair cousin has apprised you of my object in paying this visit?”

“She has, my lord, and I feel obliged to her for doing so.”

“Why, may I ask, Miss Brindsley?”

“Because, my lord, it will be the means of saving your lordship and me a great deal of time and delay in this interview. Don’t imagine,” she added, smiling, “that I wish to hurry you away. You are entitled to my esteem and respect, both from what I have seen and heard

of you, and to my courtesy and thanks for the favourable opinion which it seems you are kind enough to entertain of me."

"Favourable opinion, Miss Brindsley!—ah, what a cold term that is to a man who loves you with the tenderest and most inexpressible affection. From the first day—nay, I may say, from the first moment I saw you, my whole heart and affections became yours."

"Alas! my lord, why would a nobleman of your rank think of descending to such an humble girl as I am."

"I care not about that," he replied; "you are *not* humble. So far from that, I feel that you would ornament any condition of life—whether that condition be the highest or the lowest. I possess rank, but in your presence I feel that I am humble."

"I know your natural sincerity too well, my lord, to call this politeness or compliment. I consequently believe that you express with a gentlemanly candour exactly what you feel, and I assure you, my lord, that however flattering are the sentiments which you entertain for me, I am sorry that you ever felt them."

“Sentiments ! Don’t, Miss Brindsley, diminish the force or expression of what I feel. Sentiments ! say rather a deep and fervent passion—a passion that comprehends your whole character. It is true I might have loved you at first for your beauty—and perhaps I did ; but I heard and saw so much of your virtues, your admirable qualities, your talents, your rare accomplishments, that I think I may venture to say that the beauty of your moral attractions constitutes the highest element in the affection which I feel for you.”

“You overrate me, my lord, perhaps unconsciously, for it is probable that you are blinded by your own partiality. All I can say is, that I am proud of holding the place in your opinion which you say I do ; and I know not the woman—no matter what her rank may be—who ought not to feel proud of your affection. I am conscious, my lord, of your admirable and noble qualities. I admire your gentleness of character, your good sense, your fine feeling, and your modesty—qualities, let me say, that are unfortunately too rare in men of your rank ; but having said this—all of which I sincerely

feel—I have said all I *can* say. My esteem and respect and honour for your character are with you, my lord, but my heart is *not*.”

“Surely so young a creature as you can have had no previous attachment.”

“An attachment, my lord, which extinguishes your hopes.”

“But,” proceeded his lordship, “perhaps it was lightly entered into—not well considered.—May I ask, are you engaged? Pardon me if I am impertinent in making the inquiry, and consider how deeply I am interested in it ;—you must be engaged.”

“I am *not* engaged, my lord, as engagements are usually considered, neither is the man I love—”

“Then you *do* love—you admit as much.”

The rapid play of her imagination brought her young and truthful lover before her. She bent her face upon her hand for a short time, and on raising it her eyes were filled with tears.

“Yes, my lord,” she replied with a solemnity of expression which startled him, “I love with a spirit which not even the grave will quench.

Having admitted this to you, I trust you will be too generous to press me on a subject which must be necessarily painful to us both. This confidence is the greatest proof of my respect for your character and principles which I could give you. I repeat it, that you have my esteem and respect and my admiration, but as for my love, it is not mine to give, nor could the throne of a monarch remove it from the object on which it is fixed."

"Well, Miss Brindsley, under these circumstances, I cannot think of pressing my humble claim, but you send me away from you a melancholy and unhappy man. I do not think I can or will ever love woman more. Excuse me if I have given you pain or excited recollections that affect you. It was not, I assure you, my intention to do so. In the meantime, I wish you and your lover every happiness; *he* must be worthy of it, when he is worthy of *your* love." He then shook hands with her, bowed gracefully, and retired.

A little before the close of the third year, and when, in point of fact, her education was completed, the war in Scinde broke out, and the

regiment to which Clinton belonged was ordered to the East. It was now felt necessary that the marriage should take place, and as it was arranged, the worthy doctor was sent to London for the purpose of conducting her to Dublin, where Clinton and his mother were to meet them. There was little time lost in this agreeable trip. The doctor settled all expenses due, and in a few days they met in Morrison's hotel in Dublin.

And now for a few words with respect to Clinton himself. Here he had undergone an ordeal which lasted for three years, during which period he was necessarily obliged to mingle in the first society, was surrounded and courted by female rank and beauty ; was known to be wealthy too, for which reason many a maternal snare was laid for him ; he was in the very heyday of youth and passion, when the heart is weakest against temptation, and most susceptible of female influence ; yet did he, like a man as he was of steadfast and honourable principle, stand firm and unshaken under all the allurements by which he was beset and surrounded, and never for a moment forgot the

allegiance which he felt to be due to the great-minded girl who was willing to sacrifice her love, her hopes, and her happiness for the preservation of his fame and honour in the world. He proved himself then, as he did afterwards, a noble and illustrious standard of human virtue and magnanimity. Whether she, on the other hand, proved herself worthy of him or not, is as well known to the reader as to ourselves.

They were married by special licence in St. Ann's church, and the worthy Dr. Spillar had the pleasure of assisting in the ceremony, and giving away the bride. The marriage was strictly private, and but few persons were asked to the *dejeuner*, for reasons which we need not state. Immediately before they started upon their country excursion, Maria said to her proud and gratified husband,—

“Ask your mother to join us in our private room above stairs. I have a certain document to read which I wish her to hear. What it contains I know not, but it is a prophecy written for me, when I was a little girl, by one of the Stuart family, who were said to be remarkable for the truth of their predictions. He imposed

an obligation on my mother and me not to break the seal of it, nor to read it, until the day of my marriage, and *after* the ceremony. Go and bring your mother up ; you will find me in our own room."

He went and returned in a few minutes, saying that his mother would be with them immediately, upon which he clasped her to his heart and exclaimed—

"Now, Maria, you are mine at last !"

"And if not yours," she replied, laying her head upon his bosom and weeping, "I never should have been another's."

When Mrs. Clinton entered, Maria repeated to her the history of the prophecy, and after opening it with trembling hands and a pale cheek, she read as follows :

"There is great good fortune before you, and this will be in consequence of your own virtue and good conduct. You will be a woman of *two titles*, one great, the other greater. I desired you not to open this paper until the day of your marriage, after the ceremony. This I did to teach you the practice of self-denial,

and because I was afraid that if you opened it, your belief in the happiness that was before you, and your anxiety to obtain it, might have weakened your principles, and prevented you from working out, without knowing it, the double prophecy that will be fulfilled in your person. Nothing is sure or certain until we are in possession of it.

“JAMES STUART.”

“This is a strange and a somewhat obscure prophecy,” observed Mrs. Clinton, “but it certainly is not yet fulfilled. *Two titles*, one *great*, the other *greater* ; what can he mean by that ?”

“Never mind, my dear mother ; only let me be placed before the enemy, and it will go hard with me or I shall solve it. The fulfilment of it rests with me, Maria. In the meantime, don't part with the paper ; keep it about you until we see what the result will be. I have confidence in that same old prophet, and entertain no doubt, in consequence of what has been brought about for so far, that brighter things still will turn up for you.”

Mrs. Clinton then embraced and took leave of them both ; but we have not time to dwell upon the heart-rending separation which took place between them, especially between the mother and son. "My dear boy," she said, as he clasped her to his heart, "you are going to mingle in the dangerous tumults of war and battle, and who can say whether your mother's eyes will ever rest upon you again. The path of duty and of honour lies before you, and my last advice to you, and my firm hope is, that you will tread it bravely."

"Farewell, my beloved mother," said he, "what do I not owe you !"—here he drew Maria towards him, and folded them both in his arms. "Fear not for your son," said he ; "if I survive I will win a name, and if I fall I will fall with honour." They then separated.

The affectionate and dutiful girl made arrangements to see *her* mother before she should leave the country. She accordingly found her awaiting her in Dublin upon their return from the marriage trip to Wicklow. A pension, and a liberal one, was secured to her for the remainder of her life, by her son-in-law; and

although the sorrow of separation was natural and overwhelming for the time, yet the happiness and brilliant position of her daughter soon enabled her to subdue it.

Our happy lovers are now upon the ocean, bound for the far East; and there is only one anecdote with which, as it is connected with the destiny of our heroine, we deem it necessary to make the reader acquainted.

"So, my dear Maria," said her husband one day as they traversed the deck, "it seems you can keep your secret."

"And is it not a rare quality in a woman?" she replied, smiling.

"They say so, at all events," said he; "but the secret I allude to was one that reflected so much honour upon yourself, that I wonder how you could have kept it, and especially from *me*, above all men living."

Maria looked at him with surprise.

"I do not understand you," she said; "what do you mean?"

"So it seems you rejected an earl for my sake."

"And is that all," she replied; "why, if it's any satisfaction to you to know, I tell you I

would have rejected a prince, nay a king upon his throne, for your sake. But how did you come to learn this ?”

“From his own lips,” replied her husband. “After you had rejected him he came to Dublin, on his way home. I met him at dinner, however, in the Castle, and as we were tolerably well acquainted, we got into conversation in the course of the evening. It so happened that the celebrated beauty, the belle and toast of Dublin, Miss K——, was present, and, of course, her brilliant personal attractions were the subject of much discussion, and indeed the theme of general admiration.”

“Clinton,” said he, “she is a beautiful creature, no doubt, but I assure you that I am acquainted with another Irish girl, now at a boarding-school in London, with whom, in point of beauty—in point of any thing and every thing—she there could not bear comparison for a moment.”

“An Irish girl !” I exclaimed, “who can she be ?”

“She is a Miss Brindsley,” said he, “I understand of a respectable, but reduced family.”

"And how, my lord," I asked, "did you happen to become acquainted with this boarding-school beauty?"

"Through a cousin of mine," said he, "who is at the same establishment, and who is, besides, her particular friend and companion."

"Egad," said I, "you were very fortunate, my lord. Of course you made love to her."

"I *did* make love to her," he replied, "and more than made love to her, for I tendered her my hand and offered her the coronet of a countess."

"Then I suppose," said I, "the matter is arranged between you?"

"It is, said he. Here, my dear one," proceeded Clinton, "I could not describe what I felt. Heaven and earth, thought I, Maria false, ambitious, base, perfidious! However, I constrained my feelings as well as I could, which was a matter of some difficulty."

"And when, my lord, is the happy day to come?"

"Never for me, my dear Clinton," he replied, with a look of the deepest dejection, "never for me."

"Why," I replied, "did you not say that everything was arranged between you?"

"Yes, most certainly," said his lordship, "but the arrangement was this—that she courteously and firmly, but not, I must say, without an exhibition of generous appreciation and sympathy, declined at once, and finally, never to grant, hear, or entertain my suit. I saw she was immoveable, and I withdrew it at once."

"But," I proceeded, "did she give you no reasons or motives for this unaccountable repulse?"

"She did, and as far as I could form an opinion of them, they were highly honourable to her."

"Did she mention any names, or say she was engaged to any one?"

"She mentioned no names," replied his lordship, "and the only further reply necessary, is to say, that she has left me utterly without hope. Her ascendancy over every one who approaches her," he added, "is as wonderful as her beauty."

"Generous man!" exclaimed Maria, "he would not betray a confidence which was after all but

a slight one. I *did* admit to him that my heart was not my own to give, and this admission I made to satisfy him that his case *was* hopeless, so far, at least, as I was concerned. And, indeed," she proceeded, "you may thank the stars that my heart was yours at the time, as I knew of no one who would have had a better chance of disputing it with you, if it had not."

"Indeed I agree with you, Maria. I have seldom seen a man of his class with so few pretensions and so many virtues."

"Truth is strange—stranger than fiction."

They had not been more than three or four days in Calcutta, where it was necessary that Maria should have some rest, especially as the last part of their voyage was exceeding rough, when a gentleman, somewhat beyond the middle age, well tanned by an oriental sun, having heard that a Captain Clinton had arrived from Ireland, requested the pleasure of an interview, desiring the messenger at the same time to inform him that he was himself an Irishman. The message to *Captain* Clinton was correct, as we forgot to acquaint our readers with the

fact that he had been promoted to a company while Maria was at school. Clinton and Maria were at breakfast when the message reached them, and the former said—

“An Irishman ! We must see him ; shall I order him up, Maria, or shall I go down to him ?”

“Oh, no,” she replied, “let him come up ; you know not how my heart warms at the name of an Irishman ; do let him come up.”

In a few minutes a very gentlemanly individual entered the room, and bowing, said—

“I believe I have the honour of addressing Captain Clinton ?”

“I am Captain Clinton,” replied that gentleman ; “pray be seated, sir.”

The gentleman sat down and said—

“I took the liberty of calling on you, Captain Clinton, having heard from one of your men that you were from Ireland. I am myself an Irishman, and once knew something of a family named Clinton, who lived in C——.”

“That indeed is my family,” replied Clinton.

“And are you, too, from that neighbourhood,” asked Maria eagerly.

“Madam, I am,” said he, “and lived, while in Ireland, very near to Captain Clinton’s relatives; but the distance between our position in life prevented us from being personally known to each other.”

“Dear sir,” exclaimed Maria, rising and seizing his hand between hers, “you know not how delighted I am, and I know I may say as much for my husband too, to see any one from that neighbourhood, especially at such a long, long distance from home.”

“You are Mrs. Clinton, madam, I presume?”

“I am,” she replied, with a proud glance at her manly-looking and handsome husband; “you have friends there, of course, sir?” she enquired.

“Alas, no, madam,” he replied; “I had relatives there when I left it, but my wife died soon after my departure from the neighbourhood. I had the account of her death from a cousin of mine who came over here; and as she was the last, and dearest, and only tie that bound me to the place, I felt no wish to seek a country where my home was desolate, and my recollection of it only a memory of sorrow.”

“Pray, what was your wife’s name?” asked

Maria, "perhaps either my husband or myself may have heard of her."

"Her name was Brindsley," he replied.

"God of heaven !" said her husband, starting up, alarmed at the wild agitation of his wife, "what is this ? What does it mean ?"

"Your wife's Christian name," shrieked Maria, clinging to the stranger, "and her place of residence ? and your own Christian name ?"

The stranger named them. "And you wear a tress of her hair?" she added.

"Yes, next my heart !" he replied, and to his utter amazement, Maria fell senseless into his arms, she had not even strength nor time to utter a single syllable.

"In God's name," exclaimed the stranger, "what is the cause of this ? what is the matter with the lady ?"

"Mr. Brindsley," replied Clinton, "it is simply this, that you have my beloved wife and your own daughter now in your arms."

"God of miracles !" exclaimed the man, "this cannot be ; but what," he added, staggering back,— "what—what sensation is this about my heart, that runs all through me by her

pressure against me; is this nature recognizing its own? Oh, I cannot stand, I am overcome."

Clinton caught him under the arms, and drew him over to an ottoman—Maria, even in her insensibility, still clinging closely to him. When he got the stranger placed upon the ottoman, he attempted to raise Maria up, but she clung—still clung to him, and would not be removed.

"She will not leave you," said Clinton, "but do not be amazed—she *is* your daughter, sir; and when she recovers I will explain it to your satisfaction. She told me all the circumstances on our passage out."

Strongly and rapidly did the tears gush from the old man's eyes, and as he kissed his beautiful child's lips, they fell in torrents upon her face.

"This is not a dream," said he, "but it is—it *is* intelligible. Oh, I feel the voice of nature proclaim her as my own; awake my daughter!" said he, putting his mouth to her ear, "awake, it is your father calls upon you!"

Maria in a few moments afterwards recovered her consciousness, and looking up into the

stranger's face, she exclaimed, sobbing aloud, "Arthur—Arthur, it is my father," and for many minutes she smiled and wept and embraced him by turns."

They now became more calm, and nothing but explanations were heard on every side.

"And so your name is Maria," he said,—“precisely the same that your mother and I had agreed upon to give you.—Oh, that vile and vindictive cousin ! what a villain—what a wanton diabolical villain he was, to assure me, which he did with hypocritical tears in his eyes, that your mother had died two months after my departure from the country, so that I considered myself without either wife, or child, or relative in my native place ; as for your uncle, Maria, I saw his death in a northern paper, which accidentally came into my hands here. And now, Captain Clinton, all I have to say for the present is, that you will not have a portionless wife. God has prospered me in this rich and bountiful country—a country where my talents, as an accountant and man of business, were not only serviceable to others, but to myself. I was enabled to enter into commercial speculations

which were successful beyond my hopes ; but of this more again and at our greater leisure. In the meantime, before to-morrow's sun goes down I will pay you, sir,—the generous husband of my child,—the sum of twelve thousand pounds, as her marriage portion."

"My dear sir," replied Clinton, "I do not require it, neither will I accept it."

"Alas," exclaimed Mr. Brindsley, "how often has the very heart within me been wrung by the bitter reflection, that I had not a child to inherit it. On whom else can I bestow it? and I only thank God that she is in existence, to receive and enjoy it. You surely would not deprive me of such a delightful and natural gratification as this."

They were of course obliged to yield, and that matter was arranged and duly concluded, with the usual remainders to children, etc. etc., not so soon, indeed, as her father had said, but in the course of a few days.

Our hero's career in the East, and in the reduction of Scinde, was brilliant indeed, nor through all his marches and adventures did his faithful Maria ever separate herself from him.

Year after year he went on, adding laurel to laurel, exploit to exploit, every one more brilliant than another, when one morning his gallant general,—whom Ireland may and does claim as hers in everything but the accident of birth,—entering his quarters said—

“ Sir Arthur Clinton, I am happy in congratulating you upon the honours which you have so nobly won, and to you Lady Clinton—quite as good a soldier as your gallant husband—allow me to present my most cordial congratulations; our gracious sovereign has not forgotten him.”

“ I do not understand you, Sir Charles,” exclaimed Clinton, “ will you be good enough to explain yourself?”

“ Explain!—why damn it, that you are a Knight of Bath my boy. I beg your pardon lady Clinton, for swearing in your presence, but by G—, if ever a man deserved the honour, that chap there—your husband does; and I am to invest him the day after to-morrow, on which day both you and he must dine with me.”

The husband and wife looked at each other, and both seemed thoughtful, if not amazed, for

both reverted at the moment to the strange and mysterious prophecy.

When the blunt and brave mad-cap left them, "Maria," said her husband, "will you look once more at that strange prediction."

"No," she replied, "not until your good sword shall have been buckled on you, as a true and gallant knight." Neither did she until that ceremony was completed, when she was the first to congratulate him, after which they both read it over, puzzled as to what it could mean by the *greater title*."

At this period the war in India was far from being over, and much glorious labour remained before him who had earned his honours so well and nobly. Not long after this he was engaged at the siege of——, where, whilst gallantly leading on his brave troops, he fell, covered with wounds and glory, leaving a name behind him which will ever be enshrined as a great and brilliant one in the military history of the empire. True, affectionate, and faithful to the last, he bequeathed his immense property to the woman who had won him by an affection so disinterested, generous, and heroic.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CONCLUSION.

EXCELSIOR.

WE will not attempt to describe all that Maria — for we shall still occasionally call her so—felt on the death of her brave and gallant husband. The only consolation she experienced lay in the reflection that his death was an honourable one, and crowned his bright career becomingly. She had now no inducement, however, to remain in the East. The wars were over, Scinde was won, and she resolved once more to seek her native country. She accordingly arranged her affairs, and after taking a last look at the monument which she caused to be erected over the remains of her hero, she bade adieu to the land of the sun for ever. On arriving in Ireland she found that death had been busy with others as well as with her husband. She had been many years absent, and was not surprised to find that her

father, who had returned to Ireland, and mother, were both dead, her father having bequeathed a portion of his property to her, and the rest to distant relatives. They had not been long dead when she reached Ireland. Mrs. Clinton, too, had disappeared off the scene. The death of her brave son struck her down, and she survived him only a few months. From the moment she heard of his fate she never raised her head ; the blow overcame her, and after struggling in vain for a short time, she at last sank under it. Nor was this all. The pious and amiable historian, who had taken such a benevolent interest in her fate, and who proved himself such an active agent in promoting her happiness, was now himself the subject of history, which, indeed, has not neglected him. Her situation was, at that moment, peculiarly isolated and lonely ; for, although she entered society, and graced it by her presence, still there was no heart around her in which she could claim a kindred spirit ; and to a mind constituted as hers was, it is one of the severest trials of life to live alone in the world. She felt this, but the feelings resulting from the soli-

tude of her life were without a remedy. She felt besides, however, that she was not, and that she ought not, to live in vain ; and with this impression strong upon her, she adopted the best possible plan for reconciling herself to life and the world. This plan was the practice of private charity and beneficence. To discharge the duties of life well, and as became her wealth and rank, Lady Clinton felt herself called upon by a generous principle which she could not resist. To this call she nobly responded, and it is impossible even to guess at the full extent of the good which she privately accomplished. Still this was far from being sufficient to fill up the reasonable demands of a heart so full of kindness and affection as hers. She wanted a companion—a friend who could enter into her spirit, who could cheer her solitude, and alleviate the painful monotony of her life. But where was she to find this ? Such an individual, whether man or woman, must possess a rare combination of the virtues and best qualities of our nature : a cultivated intellect, a generous and appreciating spirit, gentle and refined feelings, together with those every-day sympathies, with-

out which life is dry and barren of its highest enjoyments.

She was still comparatively a young woman, but the scorching sun of the east, and the wear and tear of a life which had shared in all the toils and privations—in all the burning and exhausting marches, and in all those rapid changes of position and season which are incident to military duty—all these, we say, told upon her person. Her complexion, of course, suffered, but she thought not of her beauty, nor of the effects which the toils and perils she had undergone might have had upon it. Her heart was engaged in deeper and nobler feelings, and in the duties to her husband which she resolved to discharge, and from which, to the last moment of his existence, she never shrank. At the present period of our narrative she was still a handsome woman, the brilliancy of whose beauty was gone, but there still remained a serene and mellow expression, tinged, however, with a melancholy spirit that was still full of a sweet and dignified charm to the beholder, and gave ample proof of what she must have been when the light of youth was upon her.

Two or three years thus passed away, and she moved on through life quietly and beneficently, without ever launching into the whirl of dissipation and fashionable extravagance as many another woman possessing half her wealth would have done. Still she did not keep aloof from society, for she could not forget what was due to the memory of her husband and to herself as his widow.

“Truth is strange—stranger than fiction.”

One evening, when she had been nearly four years at home, leading the calm, unassuming, but benevolent life which we have described, she was asked to a party of rank, where many of the high and noble were assembled. It was a dinner party, and she was given to be handed down to the dining-room to a certain Irish nobleman, who had about a few years ago succeeded to the title of his father. Before that title descended to him, he had been an earl, so that the reader need not ask what his title was on the evening in question.

After many years' absence, especially under such peculiar and trying events as our heroine

had encountered, it is not easy to remember a countenance upon which many changes have taken place, especially when the meeting happens to be accidental and unexpected. The nobleman in question had been abroad, and travelled, as a man often does, who wishes to forget or leave behind him some source of secret care or disappointment. He too was much changed ; but there was a tone of grave cheerfulness about him which harmonized in a striking and extraordinary manner with the feelings and melancholy temperament of his companion. A kind of unaccountable sympathy seemed at once to have sprung up between them ; and what was still more strange, sometimes—from time to time—certain tones of the voice and modes of expression struck each of them as being somehow or other not unfamiliar. Nothing further happened until after the gentlemen had retired to the drawing-room, when the nobleman in question placed himself beside his dinner companion on a sofa, and resumed the conversation. Before this, however, Maria had got an opportunity of closely scrutinizing his features while in conversation with a gentleman, and his identity

with her former lover when she was at school, flashed upon her. She immediately recognised him, and felt somewhat tremulous and agitated. After he had sat by her for a while—

“I know not how it is, Lady Clinton,” he said, “but somehow I cannot help thinking that I have had the pleasure of meeting you before. The sweet and musical tones of your voice are peculiar; and although I cannot remember where I heard them, still I feel that I *have* heard them before to-night.”

She gave a melancholy, almost a sorrowful smile, and replied: “Such, my lord, as the tones of my voice are or were, I believe you have heard them; but you are somewhat changed as well as myself. There is a calm composure about you, that would seem to say that you have thought much, perhaps suffered.”

“You are right, Lady Clinton,” he replied. “I have suffered; a disappointment of the heart in early life has left me a man who feels but little interest in existence or the world. I sometimes can be cheerful, however, or at least can affect to be so.”

“Who could have occasioned *you* a disap-

pointment, my lord ? Nothing, I am sure, unless some previous engagement."

"She denied an *engagement*," said he, "but admitted an *attachment*."

This simple reply nearly overcame her. It opened up and brought back such a host of tender recollections—her young and generous lover—his fidelity to her—the bright dawn of life that was then breaking on her, and so many other memories, that for a time she could not trust herself with words.

At length she asked: "But who was this fair one, and where did you meet her, my lord ?

"At a school in London, where I was introduced to her by a cousin of mine. The retrospection, however, is painful, and the principal business of my life has been to avoid the recollections associated with it."

"The girl's name, I think," said she, "was Maria Brindsley."

The nobleman started and looked at her. "Good God," he exclaimed, "did you know her then, Lady Clinton ?"

"Yes, my lord," she replied, "I have a good right to know her, for she that was Maria Brinds-

ley, has now the honour of sitting beside you—but you see what time, and toil, and sorrow have done.”

She would have wept, but she suppressed her emotion, from a reluctance to attract observation. The nobleman instantly started up in astonishment, and turning round, gazed at her with an earnest but respectful look.

“Good Heavens,” he exclaimed, resuming his seat, “can it be?—but—yes—yes—it is so—and what a singular interview is this! This—yes—this—but it must be Providence, my dear Lady Clinton,—it must be Providence. Here have I, as if by accident, met once more the woman of whose fate I was so long ignorant—but the memory of whom drove me a wanderer over the world for years—the memory of whom has made me a solitary man, keeping himself apart from his fellows, and looking back upon that mournful disappointment with sorrow, in spite of every effort to avoid it. Yes,” he added, “you were then attached, and little I dreamt either then or since, that the object of that faithful attachment was the gallant man whose bravery has been the theme of every

tongue—whose heroism his sovereign so appropriately honoured. Is not this meeting,” he proceeded, “very strange—it resembles some incident in fiction.”

“But you know, my lord,” she replied, “that it has been said that ‘Truth is strange—*stranger* than fiction.’”

“So in this instance it certainly is,” said his lordship; “but I am glad at all events that we have met. I will not say that it almost gives one a notion of a meeting of the dead; but we have each of us had our sufferings. Yes, I am very glad we have met, and especially if you will allow me the pleasure to see you occasionally. I will look back upon this meeting as Providential. Good heavens! to me it appears like a dream, made up one half of pleasure and the other of sadness.”

“I shall be very happy to see you occasionally my lord. The world, it seems, is not much in the estimation of either of us.”

“But”—he paused—“I was about to say,” he added,—“but no, I will not give expression to it now. However, I feel that you are very kind in allowing me the privilege of calling

upon you. My cousin Emily is a countess. Indeed I have much to tell you about her."

And so he had, or at least contrived to have, and what he had to tell he always told it well, and to the purpose.

Let us now dwell for a little upon the extraordinary and almost incredible peculiarity of the circumstances under which these two most interesting characters met, after a long absence, during which both of them had suffered so much, that they had become indifferent to society and all the hollow phantoms of pleasure which it could present. Each required a companion adapted to the isolated position of their respective hearts. The one had loved the other with an affection which followed him, even in her absence, with all the bitter conviction of disappointment. She had at first appeared to him like a vision of beauty—she had deprived him of hope of her for ever—she had disappeared—vanished like the aforesaid vision—left him to sorrow and disappointment, and he never could obtain a trace of her, either as to her fate or existence. He had nurtured her image in his heart for years—had never expected to meet

her again, and consequently fell back into an apathy which threw a gloom over his existence. There is no man acquainted with life who does not know that there are many such individuals of both sexes in the living world. We ourselves have seen and known them. Be this as it may, our readers cannot forget how generously Maria had expressed to Clinton himself, her appreciation of the modesty and principles of the unassuming nobleman, and how she playfully told him that if her heart had *not* been engaged to *him*, what a risk he might have run in competing for it. Was it extraordinary then, that placed thus together a second time, as they were—adapted for each other by their peculiar fates, temperaments and dispositions, and qualified by the past experience of their lives to appreciate and sympathise with each other, was it extraordinary, we say, that frequent intercourse should have produced that result for which our readers, we have no doubt, are prepared? The heart, either of man or woman, is seldom exhausted by a first affection; but although we know that it sometimes is, yet we know also that the case, though rare, and almost always

honourable, is only an exception to the general rule under which, prompted by the great principle of social life and happiness, the heart almost uniformly acts.

Under those circumstances, need we say that one day when they were alone, her noble admirer—it is too weak a word—addressed her to the following effect :

“ Lady Clinton, I have been thinking much of the extraordinary position which you and I hold in life—not as regards the world, for there is nothing extraordinary in that ; we both hold our recognized places in it—but I mean our extraordinary position with respect to each other. I was once your lover, and you rejected me only because you had a previous attachment. You know the penalty I paid for the love I bore you, and that it has left me until now a lonely man. You deserve all honour for the constancy of your attachment, but do I not deserve something for the constancy of mine ? Think of the difference between us then. Your attachment was returned—I had no hope—but I felt that my heart was smitten into everlasting solitude, because you left me *no* hope.”

“My lord,” she replied, “you had my sympathy even then.”

“Yes, but listen to me !—I know I had, and you were good enough to say your respect and esteem—but *now*—considering all that has passed—our feelings somewhat at variance with the heartless ongoings of life—our capacity to understand each other, and to contribute to our mutual happiness—think of this, and of the melancholy claim which my hopeless constancy has upon you, and then ask yourself whether, placed as we are, we should not have our fates united. I am a man, as you know, of high rank, to which my fortune does not bear a relative proportion.”

“You need not talk of rank to me, my lord. I never had any ambition for it, nor have I now.”

“Alas, how few women could say so ! But even so, you know you should participate in it with me ; and I know how you would grace it. I do not ask that love which, had your heart not been attached to another, you would, I think, have given me when we were both younger than we are. As it is, however, we

are not beyond the reach of that steady and rational affection, which is, in cases like ours, the securest and most permanent. I ask only affection, then, not love—I ask you now to begin where lovers end—for you know that all love ends in affection, which is a higher and far holier principle. Let us therefore forget all past loves, and begin with affection.”

“To me,” she replied, “that would be not only impossibility, but ingratitude to the memory of the dead. Avoid the subject, my lord, I never can forget my first love—it is sacred and never can be transferred to the person of another. Still you are to a certain degree right, but you should not have touched upon the subject. I never can love again as I have loved ; but, my Lord, the argument which pleads probably strongest in your favour is the esteem which my affectionate and generous husband entertained for you. I know how we are both placed—I know your rank, yet I think not of it—but what is more, I know your worth, your generous and considerate spirit, and I know that perhaps my esteem, respect, affection, and society, might contribute to your happiness.

If you can rest content with those, I shall think it possible, that although the raptures of early love may not be ours, yet the pleasures of a tranquil and not unhappy life may."

"This is as much as I can expect from you," he replied, "and if you had offered more I would have valued the gift less. You are the same consistent and noble-minded being that you ever were—and that you ever will be—you can keep that first love sacred, which in your care never should be dedicated to the will or wish of another ; yet you can be affectionate and magnanimous enough to make a man happy, because he admires your fidelity to the grave, and because you feel that he deserves happiness at your hands. God bless you then, for you have made me happy already."

"Indeed, my lord," she replied, "you *do* deserve it at my hands, and you are the only man living who could claim it from me with success. Strange," she added, smiling, "that such a scene as this should take place between us after that which occurred in my school-girl days."

“Well,” he replied, smiling also, “may I not repeat your own quotation—

“Truth is strange—stranger than fiction.”

And in most of the incidents of this tale, so it was and is.

There is little now to be told. The extraordinary incidents of Maria Brindsley's life have come nearly to their close. One, however, remains, which, although the reader may anticipate it, is not the least important in this truthful history. In the general outlines and prominent facts it is strictly so. That incident was her marriage with the Marquis of —, which took place with only a moderate degree of splendour. Neither of them felt much disposed to indulge in those extravagant exhibitions which usually take place in the case of marriages in high life. It was however sufficiently brilliant to do honour to the parties.

After the *dejeuner* was over, or rather before it had concluded, Maria told her husband that she wished to show him a very extraordinary document which she had received from a fortune-teller, when she was only a little girl. “You

must come to the next room," said she, "for I do not wish to read it to any person but yourself."

"Well, my dear," said he, "I shall."

She then read him the document with which our readers are acquainted, and when she came to the words, "one *great* and the other *greater*"—

"Is this a fact," he asked, evidently astonished; "because if it be, it is certainly one of the most extraordinary documents of modern times, or perhaps, with respect to fortune-telling, that ever existed."

"Well," said she smiling, seriously and thoughtfully, "Truth is strange—stranger than fiction."

"Why, my dear," said he, "this is a *Double Prophecy*."

THE END.

POSTLIMINOUS PREFACE.

WHAT is birth but an accident of life? a fact over which we ourselves have no control, than we have over the colour of our hair. Here was a young creature whose virtues created her own distinction, and raised her to that position in the aristocracy of her country, which is honoured by her elevation to it. She, instead of bringing to the accomplishment of her high destiny hereditary rank, an honour which comes without effort or the practice of any single virtue, brought the highest qualities that ever graced or elevated the character of woman, to achieve her victory in the struggle of life wherein she sought *no* honours, and yet obtained them as her just and appropriate recompense. She is yet a living woman, an ornament to the rank on which her virtues and noble qualities reflect

distinction. The aristocracy, in fact, have much greater cause to feel proud of her, than she has to feel proud of the aristocracy, with whom, however, she is, as she ought to be, a universal favourite. The main outline and general facts of this tale are true ; and as a proof of it, we can assure our readers that the heroine of these pages now enjoys the highest title, with one exception, which a British sovereign can bestow upon a subject. Well has she deserved it, and long may she live to enjoy it!

ERRATA—FIRST VOLUME.

Page 68, 7th line from bottom, *for* "queens," *read* "queans."
Page 69, line 1, *for* "two months" *read* "twa month."
Same page, line 5, *for* "begged her," *read* "lugged her off."
Page 72, last line, *for* "when," *read* "what."
Page 177, 6th line from bottom, *for* "combine," *read* "con-
trive."

SECOND VOLUME.

Page 4, line 18, *instead of* "devoted," *read* "directed."
Page 75, line 1, *instead of* "was visible," *read* "was not
visible."
Page 183, last line, *for* "not even the grave," *read* "nothing
but the grave."
Page 193, line 7, *instead of* "never," *read* "ever."
Page 221, *instead of* "Postleminous," *read* "Postliminious."
Same page, *instead of* "no control," *read* "no more con-
trol."

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